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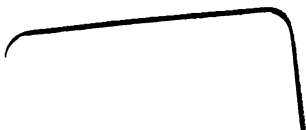
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EDWARD WILLOUGHBY:

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE,” “CLARE ABBEY,”

&c., &c.

“We may accuse our nature, but it is our pleasure; we may pretend weakness, but it is wilfulness which is the guilty cause of our misde-meanours; for, by God’s help, we may be as good as we please, if we can please to be good.”—BARROW’S SERMONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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EDWARD WILLOUGHBY.

CHAPTER I.

“ Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests lash the sea.”

COWPER.

It must be owned, that to a person of Mr. Molesey's turn of mind, the present was a very interesting occasion. If it is a pleasure to exercise whatever powers we possess, *his* powers of extracting information from chance words, looks, and glances, now fully occupied, were bringing him a perfect festival of delight. It was almost too much for

him. He could scarcely compose himself so as to order his eyes, ears, and fancy in the most proper and profitable manner. "To make it out," in the course of the evening, was his determination; and again and again he glanced with dismay at the clock, whose needles veering towards the hour of ten, warned him that his opportunities would shortly come to an end.

A few minutes after the close of his conversation with Clare, the tea was brought in, and Sir Hugh desired his daughter to go and make it. When she rose, Mr. Molesey remained at the fireplace. It was the centre of the room, and from thence he could best send forth his glances on their various errands—to station themselves as inspectors, that is, on the movements of Sir Hugh, and Edward, and Clare.

A lamp stood on the tea-table; it was at a little distance from the fire, and only a few

people stood about it. When Clare sat down, Edward moved slowly towards her, but before he reached her side, Mr. Grantley had outstripped him; and he paused, uncertain what to do.

Mr. Grantley was surprised and distressed at the paleness of Clare's cheek. He connected her appearance, in some way, with the disturbance of Edward; and knew not what to think. Whatever it was, however, he was anxious to give her the comfort of his sympathy.

"What is the matter with you to-night, my dear Miss Willoughby?" he said. "I know this has been a trying day with you; but I hope you do not mean to take your sister's loss to heart."

Clare almost started to think how, even on the wedding-day, her sister's loss was a feeling gone by, overlaid by the anxieties that had come upon her. It was with

sadness she replied, "No, indeed, I had almost forgotten to miss poor Ellen."

"Then what is the matter, my dear child?"

Clare glanced around; but her father was too near, and Mr. Molesey too watchful, for her to venture on a disclosure.

"I will tell you presently, if I can," she said. "I want your advice, for I am disturbed in mind. Meanwhile, make things go as usual, if you please; and help me not to think."

"I will, I will," he said readily, fancying he could guess in what the disturbance of her mind consisted; and he began to rattle the tea-cups, and make himself generally useful.

Edward's desire to hear Clare speak again, now brought him to the table. "Can I be of any use?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"To be sure you can, Mr. Leigh," Mr.

Grantley cried: "this is Sir Hugh's cup, I know, with the bright border ; carry it to him, and mind how you spill a drop, on pain of his displeasure."

Edward held out his hand to Clare for the cup she had filled, endeavouring, as he did so, to meet her eye—fixing on her a gaze so intent, so imploring, it could not escape the notice of any watchful observer. Mr. Grantley saw, and anxiously looked for Clare's glance in return. He had a kind natural pity for lovers in general, and an especial interest in Edward ; and though, like Ellen, he could not think him worthy of Clare, he did think Clare might make him worthy. He was a little puzzled by Clare's look in return. It was very kind, but it had none of a young girl's shrinking or timidity. "She has refused him," he thought,—and he sighed.

In truth, the disclosure that had taken place had robbed Clare's first love of all its

bloom and holiness;—*that* also was a gone-by and forgotten thing. She felt towards Edward far more as a wife might have felt. All thoughts of self, all visions of opening happiness had past away. Her first thought was for her father—she dreaded for him the discovery that must be made—her second was pity for Edward—*pity* only—she had no hope.

Edward carried the cup to Sir Hugh; but his trembling hand failed to fulfil Mr. Grantley's injunction. A slop in his saucer was a great offence to Sir Hugh, and though he said little to Edward, he commented on the advantages of a steady hand, to the person nearest to him; enlarging half-jocosely, half-seriously, on the delinquency of the present age in that particular. This person was Mr. Molesey.

"All nerves, Sir Hugh," he said.

"Nerves!" he cried indignantly; "and

what are nerves? I should like to know. It's a new thing for young people to talk of nerves. In my day, and my grandfather's day, nerves were left to sickly women."

"Under certain circumstances," Mr. Molesey said, "nerves are allowable. In that young gentleman, for instance;" and he nodded to Edward, who again was standing by the tea-table, his eyes devouring the expression of Clare's countenance.

Sir Hugh turned his head hastily. He was the most unsuspicious of mortals, and had been as blind to Edward's growing attachment to one daughter, as he had been to Colonel Ashton's towards the other; but when an idea was presented to him, he was not without quickness. He read Edward's countenance, and his own became grave—grave with thought, more than with displeasure.

His sense of dignity and propriety, however, did not permit him to allow Mr. Molesey to comment on his daughter's affairs; and merely saying, "Ah, ha!" he proceeded to change the subject, by asking some indifferent question; but his companion was not to be put off.

"If my eyes read what I see rightly, I must congratulate you, Sir Hugh. I can conceive no event more desirable under the circumstances of your family."

Half-vexed, half-curious, Sir Hugh said bluntly, "Your eyes see a good deal more than mine, Mr. Molesey; and, for the life of me, I don't know what circumstances you allude to."

"The entail, Sir Hugh."

"Hang the entail!" cried Sir Hugh sharply; "what do I care for that!"

"Well, Sir Hugh, at least you will agree

with me that nothing could be more desirable than the union of Miss Willoughby with her cousin."

Sir Hugh's blood rose in his cheek, though totally unconscious of the meaning of his companion. "You had better leave that alone," he said, commanding himself with an effort; "I never thought a mortal man would have proposed that to me."

Mr. Molesey said nothing, but his eyes turned with a peculiar expression to the tea-table, and a kind of smile passed over his lips.

Sir Hugh laid his hand on his arm, and spoke in tones that, though low, made Mr. Molesey trembling and penitent. "What do you mean, sir? what do you insinuate? You had better have bit your tongue off, sir, than dared to breathe that—that—" he gasped for breath.

"Hush, Sir Hugh—I breathe nothing—I poke at random," Mr. Molesey cried sooth-

ingly, extremely alarmed at the effects of his rashness.

But it was too late; suspicion had entered Sir Hugh's breast, and the smothered passion of years rushed to his face. Clare saw it, and knew that she might as well oppose the sea in its course as to seek to calm him now. She grew still paler, but she made no effort to arrest him.

Sir Hugh walked up to Edward ;—passion was in his face, but he had not yet forgotten to be a gentleman. "Forgive me, Mr. Leigh," he said, in a voice not without dignity, "but certain words I have heard compel me to ask a painful question. If I am in the wrong you must pardon me. Are you what you seem?"

Edward turned round with a startled gaze. His eyes had been fixed on Clare, and he had not observed Sir Hugh's approach. Though startled, however—though the blood

rose to his temples—he was perfectly calm. “I had not wished to say so *here* and *now*,” he said, fixing a stern look on Mr. Molesey; “but I will not deny my name: I am Edward Willoughby.”

The scene that followed was awful. The words that burst from Sir Hugh’s lips were the words of a madman. Mr. Molesey shook like an aspen leaf; the rest of the spectators stood paralyzed: some had not heard, some did not understand, what had passed—some dared not, others waited the moment to interfere.

At the first wild words, Clare came and stood by her father’s side. She knew that nothing could be done; she knew that passion would have its way; she attempted nothing;—till a pause came, she endured in silence. And when a pause, a gasp for breath, did give an opportunity for speech, she still said nothing, but simply laid her

cold hand on his hand, and looked up tenderly and imploringly in his face.

Sir Hugh was arrested for an instant; her touch was so icy cold, it made him shiver in the midst of his madness; he paused and looked at her; but as he gazed a new and fiercer attack of passion came on. Mr. Molesey's insinuations recurred to his excited mind, and in scornful and menacing language he reproached Edward for having stolen into his house and robbed him of his child. All the epithets by which *ungentlemanlike* actions are implied came thick and fast to his lips, and with the eloquence of passion were poured out by his tongue.

Edward had commanded himself till now; but at this attack, more galling to the feelings than an imputation even of crime, his self-control gave way—passion flew to his cheek and his lips, and his keen light eyes darted sparks of fire. It was fury

ungovernable, and words might then have been spoken no after repentance could efface, if Clare had not interposed to arrest it.

She had hitherto stood silently by her father, giving him her sympathy, even in his madness, feeling that he was the offended one, and grieving for him in her heart. But terror seized her now; there was nothing which seemed impossible to two spirits thus fired with wrath; and hurrying to Edward, she laid her hand on his arm. "Edward, you will be sorry all your life if you speak," she cried: "you have done wrong, and you should bear to hear it."

Docile as a child he obeyed her; the flashing eyes were cast down; the passionate blood ebbed away; he stood mute and still. A hush followed the storm.

The hush, however, was but for an instant;

the sight of Edward's obedience renewed the tempest in Sir Hugh's soul.

But the distressed and astounded spectators had now recovered themselves. The scene requires time to describe—in reality it passed quickly.

Mr. Grantley approached Sir Hugh, and murmured some grave and warning words in his ear; and Ralph, pausing only to bow to Sir Hugh, took hold of Edward's passive arm and led him away.

The door closed, and was followed by total silence. It was awkward enough to actors and spectators, but Sir Hugh was not himself enough to feel it. Clare drew a chair to the table, made him sit down, and brought him some tea. She then returned to her place and former occupation, and in a steady, though touching voice, offered tea to others. By her looks she appealed to their kindness to

assist her in her endeavours to put aside what had passed. Her desire was quickly responded to; questions were asked, at first in a whisper, then in a more assured tone, and in two or three minutes conversation was resumed.

"You had better go and play, if you can, my dear child," Mr. Grantley said tenderly. "The carriages cannot be here for twenty minutes or so, and nothing will help us to be ourselves so well as a little noise; you know, too, how it will soothe your father."

Clare did not need to be pressed. She went to the piano-forte; and under the influence of music, tranquillity returned to many startled minds.

After a time Mr. Molesey approached her. If ever a man looked awkward and "sheepish" he did so. "I am sure, my dear Miss Willoughby," he said, half penitently, half with a desire to excuse himself, "I had no

idea of what mischief I was doing. If you had but given me a hint of the state of the case, I am sure I should have been the last person to distress you."

"I could not well do that," Clare said, without unkindness; "it was not for me to have any part in my cousin's deception. I hoped you would understand that."

"I am sure I don't know how to ask you to forgive me. If I had had the least idea as I said before. I believe," he added, some better feelings struggling to the surface, "this night will give me a lesson I sometimes want. It is better to be careful in speaking of other people's concerns."

Clare could scarcely restrain a smile of amusement, troubled in spirit as she was. She answered him kindly, however, begging him to think no more of what had happened. Had there been the faintest hope of success, she would have made a further request that

he would *speak* no more—for her love and honour for her father, made her shame great—but she knew it would be humbling herself in vain—Mr. Molesey must speak or die.

The party at length dispersed—the few guests who were staying in the house accepting Mr. Grantley's proposal to take a moonlight walk and see him home. They bowed, that is to say, and left the room with him—whether the moonlight walk was taken, remains untold.

Mr. Grantley had ascertained from Clare that she required no assistance. “There is nothing to be done but to comfort papa,” she said; “and I think I shall be the best to do that. I know,” and for the first time a faint blush flitted over her cheek and gave a new opening to Mr. Grantley's views, “my part in this will be the worst for him to bear.”

The door closed again, and the family were left alone. Then Mrs. Hollis, who with but a few startled moments intermission, had worked steadily during the whole evening, lifted up her voice and spoke her mind.

"Sir Hugh, I am perfectly ashamed of you."

Sir Hugh had remained where Clare had placed him, crushed and exhausted with passion—his two arms crossed on the table and his head bent. But there was something in this homely rebuke that acted upon him like a tonic. He raised his eyes—his brow cleared, and he was himself again.

"You can't be more ashamed of me, Mrs. Hollis," he said, very seriously, "than I am of myself. The offence was great, but that's no excuse. See what a poor creature man becomes when he lets go his reason. No better than the beasts that perish."

"My dearest papa," Clare said, putting

her arms around his neck, "are you unhappy?"

He did not shake off her embrace—but he did not return it. He looked at her for a few moments with penetrating eyes, and then in a voice which, though he evidently tried to soften it, was hard and stern. "And how long, Clare," he asked, "have you known of this?"

Large tears gathered in her eyes, but she could only feel pity for suspicions still more bitter to him than to her. "Only to-night," she replied, gently. "I only waited to tell you till we were alone."

He made no reply, begged no pardon, but held out his arms to her and wept.

Clare felt her hardest task was to be done, and she was impatient till she had performed it. Before another word was said, she began, with all the calmness she could master.

"Part of what you suspected, Papa, is true. Edward has—" she paused, then hurried on, "I will never leave you while I live—never grieve you—never wish what you do not wish. I put myself wholly in your hands as I ought to do; but I must let you know what we *both* feel." She put her hands in his while she spoke, in mute unconscious token of what she said.

Hate, it was almost that; the gathered hate of years flashed in Sir Hugh's face. "Villain!" he cried, stamping with his foot. "I would rather see you in your grave first;" and swinging her hands away, he began to pace with hurried footsteps up and down the room.

Clare stood still, silently grieving over that agony of mind whose existence these outward signs too deeply betokened.

Mrs. Hollis, however, felt her sense of

justice keenly offended by Sir Hugh's conduct. "Indeed, Sir Hugh," she said, "I think villain is an unseasonable word. Of Mr. Willoughby I know nothing ; but though I am far from calling Mr. Leigh's conduct irreproachable, I must, in justice say, that I see no signs of villainy about him."

Her words were spoken to the winds. Sir Hugh's tramp went on, deep sighs or groans alone breaking the heavy silence.

At length Clare went to him and again, though more timidly, put her arm round his neck. "My dearest Papa," she said, "why be so unhappy?" I told you what I felt, because I will not have one feeling you do not know, but now let it be forgotten. Let us forget all the painful things we have heard and said to-night, and be as happy as we were before."

"Indeed, Sir Hugh," Mrs. Hollis observed

again, "I think Miss Willoughby speaks very properly. I don't know what more you could require."

"Require!" he said, turning upon her as if it was a relief to him to vent his wrath upon any living thing, "do you speak to me as if I was a tyrant, Mrs Hollis?"

"By no means," she replied, with dignity; "I wished to bring you to recollection of yourself—nothing more, and now my best advice to you is to go to bed."

"You are right," he said mournfully. "God forgive me, I have sadly forgotten myself. Come here, my darling child, and let me bless you before I wish you good night. Clare," he continued, grasping her hand, "I repeat it, I would rather lay you down dead in Middlethorpe Church-yard than give you up into the hands of that bad man. Though it should break my heart and yours too, I

will do my duty. But I do it in love, my darling, not in anger—in love and bitter sorrow ;” and tears again rolled down his cheeks. He was a firm, strong man, but the night’s passion had made him weaker than a child.

“I know that, papa,” Clare said, kissing him; “and though I think you judge Edward too hardly, that shall make no difference to me. Let it all be forgotten, and let us be as happy as we were before.”

He shook his head. He had received a shock from which, in the violence of its present feeling, it seemed impossible ever to recover.

CHAPTER II.

"At length I got unto the gladsome hill
Where lay my hope—
Where lay my heart; and climbing still,
When I had gained the brow and top,
A lake of brackish waters on the ground
Was all I found."

GEORGE HERBERT.

IN one of his conversations with Clare, Edward had once alluded to such a question as this—the case of a daughter forbidden by her father to marry the person to whom she was attached. He had spoken of it vaguely, yet with a desire to hear her sentiments on the subject. He had called it a strife on the daughter's side between inclination and duty.

"In such a case," Clare replied, "I can

hardly imagine a strife. When duty is so plain what can be done but follow it?"

"Inclination speaks," Edward said, "even when duty is plain."

"I should hardly think it would," she said. "I think inclination would lead one to follow duty. One might be grieved at what was to be done, but there could be no strife, no doubt about it."

"You disbelieve, I see," Edward said, smiling, "the corruption of human nature, for what is that but that we have eyes to see what is right and wills averse to do it."

"Weak to do it," was her reply; "hardly averse as a general rule. I think not at least. What I meant, however, was this. Where there is a possibility of being blind, then I can conceive a strife between duty and inclination—then I can fancy catching at straws to save oneself from a painful self-denial; but there can be no blindness in the

case you mentioned;—even the old heathens knew that a daughter should obey her father.”

“But the father may be unjust. Then the duty becomes doubtful, and strife must begin, even by your rule.”

“No,” she said, shaking her head and smiling; “I can conceive nothing doubtful in so plain a duty as a daughter’s obedience. There *may* of course be exceptions, but I can hardly fancy them.”

When Clare sate alone at the close of the stormy evening, this conversation with singular vividness was brought back to her mind. It had occurred three or four weeks before, yet she found herself repeating it as if it had but just taken place. It seemed as an admonition from her sane and sober, to her present excited self, and she bowed her head in thankfulness for the strength and help it brought. The words she had then

said had perhaps been spoken over confidently—in ignorance of the weakness of all human hearts in the actual presence of temptation, but though spoken confidently they were spoken sincerely, and their sincerity of purpose made them avail her now. More humbly, for she owned her weakness, yet not less stedfastly, the words were repeated—strife there should be none. Her obedience should be a willing and a cheerful one, the path of duty, the path of inclination also.

With this thought in her mind she fell asleep, with this resolve she awoke. It is perhaps *unheroinelike* to allow she slept, but there was something so healthful in the constitution of her nature, so straightforward and trusting—so disposed to hope in the end—so brave to endure for a time, that nothing fought against her worn-out nature's desire for rest. She slept, therefore, and was refreshed.

Sir Hugh slept also, but less peacefully. Dreams of Edward, who assumed every variety of hateful form, poisoned his rest, and the remembrance of his passion saddened and sobered his waking hour. He shook off, however, his troubles early in the day. He was ashamed of his passion, but his mind remained unchanged. When, therefore, he had relieved himself of his shame for the excesses of his passion, he was comparatively restored to himself. This he did in his own manner. When the family and household assembled for family prayer, he spoke thus : —“ I suppose you all know, whether present or not, what happened last night. I was very justly offended—but the offence of others does not excuse my own conduct. I desire all your prayers, that God will forgive me and all miserable sinners.”

Shortly after breakfast Ralph Caradoc ar-

rived. He came as an ambassador from Edward, but he was conscious he had something to say for himself.

Sir Hugh was expecting the visit, expecting and dreading it ;—he loved a little pleasant excitement and dissipation of thought, but conflicts of feeling and struggles of passion were hateful to him. They made him as he expressed it, “not his own man,” and after the discovery of his weakness the previous evening, he dreaded them more than ever.

Ralph dreaded it almost as much ; his mind, true and honourable in all its feelings, revolted from the position in which he found himself. It was even worse to be an accessory than an actor in such a case.

Sir Hugh’s grave face and distant reception abashed him still more. None who knew Sir Hugh in his ordinary jovial temper, could guess how much of dignity he

could throw into his manner when he pleased.

"I am come to ask your forgiveness, Sir Hugh," he began hastily, "not to make excuses. I am heartily ashamed of myself, and I am not ashamed to own it."

Sir Hugh was pleased; there was a fearless honesty about Ralph which deprecated harsh judgments. He answered, however, with gravity.

"And yet, Mr. Caradoc, excuses are necessary for a conduct so extraordinary."

"You must not suppose, Sir Hugh, I have none to offer, but excuses, though they palliate the evil of the action in itself, cannot affect the evil done. For that I must ask forgiveness before I offer excuses."

"Forgiveness is a very easy word to speak, Mr. Caradoc, not so easy to feel. I should like to hear your excuses."

"We hoped to do good," Ralph said with

earnestness, "to disarm prejudice, to heal divisions—this was our only desire. We were wrong, I confess, in the means we chose, and at our age such error was inexcusable. We ought to have known that evil cannot tend to good, nor crooked ways lead to a right end."

"That's well said, Mr. Caradoc," Sir Hugh replied gravely, yet with satisfaction; "but how comes it that you who can reason so well could act so ill."

Ralph coloured. "All men's judgments," he replied, "are at times liable to err. That mine has done so in this case, I confess with pain. I am sorry for my own sake, and still more sorry, Sir Hugh, for the uneasiness we have caused to you."

"Be most sorry for the first, Mr. Caradoc," Sir Hugh said, looking at him keenly. "The action is more than the pain, it is not a

light thing for an honourable man to be led into a dishonourable transaction." Poor Ralph had felt this already. "But," he continued with kindness, "I do believe that in this case it was your judgment only that was misled, and, therefore, let us say no more about it; I will try and forget your share as soon as I can."

Ralph's lips opened to reply, but as if he guessed their import, Sir Hugh stopped him.

"I speak to you only, Mr. Caradoc; Edward Willoughby, or *Mr. Leigh*," he pronounced the name with ineffable disgust, "has no part in what I say."

"And yet," Ralph cried eagerly, "Edward spoke through my voice, and all that I feel, he feels yet more deeply. If you will not hear me for him, hear him for himself."

"There is nothing to hear," Sir Hugh said coldly, "I already know as much as I

wish to know of him or his affairs. I have the power of judging of men's conduct in common with other human creatures, and I need no assistance in judging of Edward Willoughby. For ten years I have watched him narrowly, at first with hope, then with fear, then with utter condemnation. I have done with him."

"But you may have misjudged, Sir Hugh; report is a false friend, and a still falser enemy. Let a man be brought to the bar, and there plead his cause; in our country none are condemned unheard."

"His companions *have* been brought to the bar," Sir Hugh said, quickly, naming one or two of Edward's former most disreputable associates.

"That's too true," Ralph replied, shaking his head; "but Edward himself was deceived, as all men may be. He is enthusiastic; glittering qualities blind him, or

did blind him—he is wiser now ; and it was this,” he continued, with earnestness, “these disappointments that opened his eyes. He longs now for better things, for truth, and purity, and moral worth—to gain these he came to Middlethorpe ; on the hope of gaining these, by allying himself with you, he has fed his mind for months, and even years past.”

“ And was there no better way, Mr. Caradoc, to gain my favour than by a trick. Do you think if Edward had gone to live a home, had fulfilled his duties there, had acted wisely and discreetly for two or three quiet years, that I should have shut my doors against him. But what does he do ? Disgusted with his associates, you say, he goes abroad, and what I hear of him in Italy is of his plotting with rebels, living with the offscouring and refuse of the country. No,

no, Mr. Caradoc, believe me I am right, and one day you will own it."

"And why, Sir Hugh, are you who are so kind to me so harsh to him?"

"Because *you* were weak enough out of good nature, to go against your sense of right. Do you think I can make no distinction. *His* mind has lost the sense of right; to trick and to plot is native air to him."

"Not native air," Ralph said, with one more earnest effort; "can that man have a tainted mind who loves—and love even is a cold word to what Edward feels—such a mind as your daughter's?"

"The devil is not altogether black," was Sir Hugh's hasty answer.

"But," continued Ralph, seizing the illustration, "a mind like hers could not be drawn to love the devil. Unless I read her countenance wrongly last night, she does

love him. Can you not trust him for her sake, and for her sake forgive him?"

"My dear Mr. Caradoc," Sir Hugh said, laying his hand warningly on his arm, "it is old advice not to interfere between man and wife, neither should there be interference between father and daughter. My wife," he continued, with agitation, "trusted to me these two innocent girls, and with her last words prayed me to watch over their welfare when the time came for them to marry. I will fulfil my trust, and while I breathe will guard them from the profligate and the unworthy."

There was nothing more to be said. Ralph stood in silent dejection. He was at no time a match for Sir Hugh, and a painful consciousness of the unworthiness of his own and Edward's conduct subdued and dispirited him.

"What are your future plans, Mr. Cara-

doc?" Sir Hugh asked abruptly, after some minutes silence.

"Edward begged me to say that he submitted himself entirely to your wishes."

"Then the sooner he leaves this country—this neighbourhood I mean—the better," was the decided reply. "I do not say this harshly, but to guard *him* from false hopes, and my poor child from needless pain. It's my maxim, Sir, that what is to be done should be done quickly. Let him go to-morrow. He has my wishes for his welfare, body and soul, but nothing more."

"You will not see him?"

"No."

With kind words for himself, and the expression of a desire when circumstances permitted it, to renew his acquaintance with him, Ralph was dismissed by Sir Hugh, and he slowly took his way homewards.

Edward was sitting at the drawing-room

window, expecting him. He saw him as soon as within the bounds of possibility he could be seen; and his eye no sooner fell on him, than the answer he was awaiting was received. There was nothing of glad tidings in the lingering footsteps of Ralph; he remained where he was: no need to hasten to receive what he brought.

‘My dear fellow,’ Ralph said, approaching him, ‘I have failed—better to put you out of suspense at once.’

‘I saw that, Ralph,’ he replied.

‘I suppose I was a bad advocate; only trust me, I did my best.’

‘Well, Ralph, and what next?’

‘I told Sir Hugh you would submit to his wishes, and his wish is that you should leave this place to-morrow.’

‘So be it,’ Edward said quietly; ‘what must be done had best be done quickly.’

‘Sir Hugh’s own words, Edward. He

said he did not mean it harshly. It was to save *you* from false hopes, and *her* from needless pain." A flash crossed Edward's brow at these words, but he said nothing. "He said that you had his best wishes for your welfare ; but he would not see you. To tell you the truth, Edward, there is not much hope at present. I will tell you all his arguments another time."

"And now, Ralph," Edward said, after a silence, "I have one thing more for you to do for me."

"Anything, my dear Edward, that I *can* do."

"You must write to Sir Hugh, and say, that I cannot leave this neighbourhood without seeing . . . her." He said the word with effort.

Ralph looked much aghast. "I knew you would wish it, Edward ; but, indeed, I did not dare to ask."

"I am glad you did not: I wish you to write it now. If you will not I will, but I had rather you did; he will not refuse."

Ralph sate down at the writing-table, and wrote "Dear Sir Hugh"—he then twisted his pen, stroked his chin, and cleared his throat once or twice—finally, laid down the pen.

Edward watched him, not without a feeling of amusement; but he gave no assistance till called upon.

"How shall I put it, Edward?" he asked at last; "I'm uncommonly stupid in these things."

"In your own words, Ralph, they are always the best; but let the purport be, that though I will go as he pleases, I will *not* go without seeing her. I can't"—he went on, excitedly. "Have last night for my last impression! I cannot do it, Ralph! I will not answer for myself—I *must* see her,"

and," in words too low to be heard—"be forgiven!"

"That will do, Edward, I see—now I can write;" and he wrote—

"DEAR SIR HUGH,

"Edward will do all you wish. We shall leave the Lodge to-morrow morning: but before he goes, he makes one request—to see Miss Willoughby; and, if you can grant it, I shall be for ever obliged to you. Put yourself in his place and at his age, and ask yourself, if the impression that was left last night, would not be too painful for him to carry through life—as, if it must be so, *the last?* I am afraid you may think me impertinent and presumptuous, but the fault is in my way of expressing myself, not in the request, or I would not make it.

"I remain, dear Sir Hugh,

"Your faithful and obliged

"RALPH CARADOC."

He put it into Edward's hands, and watched his changing colour and clouding countenance, as he read it. He nodded his approval, however; only as he turned away, he murmured, "Through life?—no."

Sir Hugh was just going out when the note was put into his hands. His impulse on reading it was to throw it at the head of the servant who brought it; but he was sufficiently on his guard this day to restrain the impulse, and content himself with tossing it into the garden; and after a moment's thought he was so far ashamed of this action that he went himself and picked it up and read it over again. While reading it Clare came into the drawing-room and approached him at the window where he stood. He had told her of Ralph's visit and of his command to Edward. She had expected nothing else, and though she intended, after a time, to ask leave to write a final and fare-

well letter to Edward, an interview had been beyond her thoughts, almost, for her father's sake, beyond her wishes.

After a moment's hesitation Sir Hugh put the note into her hands. The desire to make some reparation for the violence of his conduct and the injustice of his suspicions was the impulse that prompted the action.

She read it through with a rising colour. Sir Hugh watched her narrowly and sighed. "I believe you wish to see this man," he said, with agitation. "Yes," as her colour deepened, "I see you do—so be it then, Clare—I trust you; I well may; see him, you have my leave this once, and then no more. But let us have no passions, no madness," he added gravely, "such things are my abhorrence."

He left her and wrote this note.

"DEAR MR. CARADOC,

"I have consented to your wish

for your sake, and my daughter's; but I consent to it on the condition that Edward Willoughby will remember his and my daughter's duty, and after this permission seek no more interviews with her. Let him be at Middlethorpe at three o'clock.

“Yours, &c.,

“HUGH WILLOUGHBY.”

Sir Hugh was out when Edward arrived. He was himself the soul of honour, and even in hate he loved to show his confidence and trust in others. He went, therefore, without making any stipulations regarding the length of the visit, and went to a distance on purpose that irritation of mind should not tempt him to play the spy.

He had left orders that Edward was to be admitted. He was shown, therefore, into the drawing-room at once. Ralph remained outside waiting for him.

Edward sate down,—his mind was in a state of chaos—without form although not void. It was set on this meeting with a fixedness which banished thought.

“So full, the feeling seemed almost unfelt.”

He longed for Clare's appearance and yet dreaded it. He listened for her coming with an intenseness that made his heart's beatings deceive him, and yet he felt every moment's delay a blessing and a boon.

She entered without his perceiving it at her mother's door. There she stood for an instant till he started up, then without other greeting she said, “Will you come in here, Edward—here, I think, we shall not so easily forget ourselves or think this world's hopes are all.”

He approached and entered the room without speaking. Then he stood looking at her. She was changed; even in one day she was

changed. Care and anxiety and anything of effort or conflict were so new to her that even in one day the very expression of her countenance was changed. A very light breeze is heard on a still evening, a small cloud is seen on a blue sky, so a change attracted you on Clare's brow. It affected you as sadness affects you on the countenance of a child, more than much anxiety on a melancholy face.

This change Edward saw and felt, and for the first time that day the fears and hopes that centred in his own self fell from him. He thought of all the care and distress, the elements of strife and disunion he had brought to her and her happy home, and moving towards her and taking her hand in both of his, he softly murmured "Pardon."

Large tears sprang into Clare's eyes. His softness had always moved her strangely and

the more so now from being unexpected. She was prepared for passion and excitement, prepared to resist his pleadings, but was not prepared for this. She had meant to be so calm and self-possessed. She turned away her head to hide her emotion.

"Tears, Clare," Edward said, with a feeling of mingled joy and sorrow, "are they for me or for yourself?"

"You seemed changed," she said, brushing them away. "I could not help them. Oh! Edward, this has been a rash business; what end could you hope for but this?"

"What end do you mean, Clare?" he asked, looking fixedly at her.

She sat down without answering him.

"What is the end, Clare?" he repeated, approaching her. She understood what he meant, and raised her eyes to his, with a blush.

"Ah, then," he cried, "though rash it has

not been in vain. Clare, you love me, and my end is gained. All else I can bear."

"But that also must have an end," she said, gently yet steadily.

"Hear me, Clare, before you decide. Even a criminal is allowed to plead his cause. You have never heard me. You cannot judge with a just judgment."

"But, dear Edward, nothing you can say can alter my duty. That remains simple and plain."

"Hear me," he repeated, passionately.

She made no opposition, and he began with excitement in his manner. "I am not going to defend my life and actions. I acknowledge at once that I have often strayed from the right way; but never from the love of what was evil. I have wanted a guide; I have wanted a hope; I have got entangled in evil things, even in desires to do good. From

the first day of my life till this moment, I have never ceased to worship perfection ; and that worship has brought me here at last. I have been often baffled, often deceived. Here I cannot be deceived, but I may be cast off and abandoned. Now, Clare, be patient, and hear a sketch of my life. My first love was my mother. You only, in all the world, remind me of her : most men love their mothers—mine I worshipped and adored. If she had lived I should never have been what I am. She died when I was fifteen—a wild, ardent boy, whose fiery temper she might have led and trained to good ; but which, without her, went astray. You know my father's character and opinions, but you cannot tell the force that character had on others. I don't know why it was, for he himself was not carried away ; but his words were like a flame ; all who heard them felt maddened by

them. I, his son, more than any. My mother never liked his wild words; her heart was at Middlethorpe: not that in her wise and calm judgment she denied the truth of what he said, but she saw the fallacies that lay beneath his theories, and knew that a wise and holy life was more effective against errors than any vain declamation. While she lived she kept me wise. I had an ardour to do good: she encouraged it, but brought it down to practice;—first of all things, she said, a good life. She died, as I said, and then I went mad. I was miserable for her loss—not for months but for years: my guide, my example was gone, and I was like a boat on a tossed sea. My brain took fire; I abandoned myself to the guidance of men unworthy of my trust, and I allow it, Clare, I went astray. I can think now with scorn and wonder at my delusion; and yet there are

times even now when I envy my old self. It might be deluded by evil, but it did not love evil; it lived less for its own sake—it was filled with more generous aspirings. I sometimes long for a breath of those early days, as a man longs for water in the desert. My father took fright at the fruits of his own words, and tried to tame and recall me; but in vain. In vain, until he died. In his last illness I attended him: after his death I mourned him at home and alone. Death is a solemn thing, and in those days the question arose—what had my life been? Whither did it tend? What had I done? Of all my early dreams what one thing had been accomplished? Such questions once asked, man is sobered: he may fall away from habit, from inclination; but he is blind no more. I awoke, and very bitter was my awakening. The pangs of despised love are felt in all

failures of those things we have worshipped, be they even but dreams. It was then, Clare, in my disappointed, desolate existence—for those who had a right to love me were gone, and I had made myself but few *friends*—that my love for you assumed a definite form. You think me mad, perhaps, for talking of love in those days ; but it is no idle expression. My mother first planted that love in my mind. Her heart, as I said, was at Middlethorpe. I do not speak of opinions, those I believe she condemned ; but she prized, above all opinions, honest purpose, and a sober and religious life. She pointed my thoughts often to Middlethorpe, and, in her last illness, spoke in terms I never forgot, of an angel child who was comforting her father after a grievous loss. I guessed her wish even then, Clare, young as I was, and in the excited moments of my first misery I vowed that every wish of hers

should be accomplished. In all the years that followed I never ceased to think of you ; I had no definite form to dwell on, but I thought of something fair and good, and like my mother, who warned me from evil, and called me to virtue. Dear Clare, even when unknown you have often saved me. When I came to myself, the hope of winning you rose up the hope of my life. I wrote to your father : it was a conceited letter, and he answered by desiring me to write no more. I tried a better one : it was unnoticed. In two years an old friend wrote for me ; that letter also was unanswered. I then came down here. I did not see your bodily form, but I heard of you. I saw Middlethorpe ; I saw how good and happy you all were, and I felt that I, too, might be like you. You know the rest. If my plan was a rash one, yet it had a good desire for its end, and was my last

hope. I thought I should win you to love me, and then I painted a good and happy life before me. Dear Clare, shall it not be so? Will you not win the wanderer back? Will you turn away from the prodigal son? Dear Clare! Do you utterly reject and condemn me?"

Clare remained silent, not from indecision regarding herself, but from sorrow for him. All the hopes for his welfare, all the gathered interest of years, seemed to rise and fill that moment.

"You are silent, Clare," Edward said, watching her intently; "you pity me."

"I do, indeed, Edward," she said simply; "but that must not, cannot change my duty. There is only one thing to be done, and we must submit."

"Submit to what?" he asked, with flashing eyes.

"To the will of God, which commands a child to love and obey her father," she said reverently.

"Ah ! Clare, but he is unjust."

"Is he so unjust, Edward ? You have, at least, to prove to him that he is so."

"I will, I will," he cried fervently, catching with a brightening countenance at her words. "I will show myself worthy of his trust and favour. Dear Clare, you have given me hope. I have something to live for."

"All men have the hope of being better, Edward ; you have it for yourself, and I have it for you ; but you must not mistake me,—Hope is not mine to give or take away. Dear Edward, will you not see ? I love my father, and have submitted entirely to his will. To the uttermost I shall try to do it." She spoke with firm and strong decision.

Edward heard her, and remained deep in

thought. The silence lasted so long that Clare rose. She felt that all that need be said was said, and the time was come for them to part.

But at the first movement, Edward arrested her, and grasping her hand with strong agitation said,—“One word more, Clare—one thing I must ask, and it is no sin for you to grant it. You must submit yourself to your father—so be it; I believe, I love you the better for it; but you love me and I have some claim. Say only that you are mine—mine *only*—mine till death us do part—in heart and word . . . *my wife*.” He spoke the last words with indescribable tenderness, as if even to pronounce them brought him nearer to her.

Clare’s colour rose, and tears stood in her eyes; but she withdrew her hand with a seriousness that struck him.

"Have I displeased you?" he asked. "I did not mean to offend."

"Offend!" oh! Edward, no; but it grieves me that you should ask, and I should only have to refuse. What a poor obedience mine would be if I made a promise like that. Let us do our duty now, Edward, and leave the future in the hands of God. It will be better, and we shall be happier in the end, if we learn to submit to the will of others, and not follow our own. I must go now, dear Edward,—God bless you. We are cousins, and as such, we may still care for each other."

Afterwards the ghosts of words he might have spoken—of arguments he might have used to combat her steadfastness, thronged about him; but then he was dumb. He had said he loved her for her obedience, and *then* it was so.

She gave him her hand again for an in-

stant, then withdrew it, and was gone. Edward heard her steps glide away—heard the door close, and knew that he was alone. He stood for a moment immoveable where she left him, then sate down and covered his face with his hands.

There he remained till Ralph looked into the room and summoned him. At the call of his friend, he started up, and to Ralph's compassionate "Are you ready, Edward, my dear fellow?" answered only, "Yes, as soon as you will;" but when Ralph laid his hand on the door of the drawing-room, leading to the entrance hall, Edward drew back. "No," he said, "I will go this way once more," and throwing open the window he stepped into the garden.

Ralph followed him. They crossed the garden in silence, and, as by mutual impulse, paused on the terrace beyond to look back.

The day was dry but chilly, and there were signs of approaching winter. The day before, summer and sunshine had brightened the garden—in a few hours all was changed. The wind howled among the trees—the stream ran by with a rushing sound—leaves dried by the long drought, fell fast in the breeze, and the lingering flowers drooped and looked black from the effects of a morning's frost. A dismal hue pervaded all things from the grey sky to the misty fields. It was a hue that harmonized with the feelings of the young men.

They stood for many minutes in silent contemplation; then, as a sigh which he could not restrain burst from Ralph's lips,—Edward laughed a painful laugh, and pulled him by the arm. "Come, Ralph," he said, we must not grow sentimental, and turning into the adjoining copse, he hurried on.

They walked in silence. When it was broken, it was by Edward murmuring to himself—

“Sweet day—so cool, so calm, so bright;
Bridal of the earth and sky—
The dew will weep thy fall to night,
For thou must die.”

“Those are pretty lines, Edward,” Ralph said, desirous to express his sympathy by some conversation. “Whose are they?”

“Mine,” was the passionate reply. “No matter what old poet wrote them, he did not mean what I mean. They are mine now.”

“My dear Edward,” Ralph said kindly, almost tenderly, “I wish I was better able to give you comfort.”

“Thanks, Ralph; but comfort is the last thing I want. If I did, you give it—for you neither reproach me for my wilfulness—nor exult in your wisdom—nor worry me with

consolations no man feels. I have not much power to think about you just now ; if I had, I would say what I think of your conduct in this business. But now tell me, did you see her ?”

“ Yes,” Ralph said, some sudden feeling sending his blood to his temples. “ She saw me outside, and came to wish me good bye.”

“ Did she say anything ?” Edward asked, questioning with effort.

“ She said, she hoped she should some time see me again ; and she told me to be a good friend to you, Edward, and to advise you to attend to the duties of your life ; and then she asked me to go to you, and told me where I should find you. This was about all. Perhaps she would have said more if I had spoken ; but I don’t know how it was, I felt so sorry to see her, I could not say much, and she went up stairs and I came to you.”

Edward said no more, and the rest of the way they walked in silence.

At the Lodge they found Mr. Grantley awaiting them. To his regret he had been called in the morning to a death-bed at some distance, and had been unable to attend to Sir Hugh, or Clare, or Edward. He came now to see if he could be of use ;—offering himself as mediator if Edward pleased. Both Edward and Ralph, however, concurred in the propriety of taking no further steps at this time. Mr. Grantley's offer was therefore declined. At parting, he spoke a few words of grave and kind admonition to Edward. They were received without resentment, although from the disturbance of his mind, with, perhaps, little profit. Mr. Grantley then wished them good bye, and hastened to Middlethorpe.

So ended Edward's plot.

CHAPTER III.

"We cannot kindle when we will,
The fire that in the heart resides :
The spirit bloweth and is still;
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd,
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd."

ARNOLD.

A YEAR passed at Middlethorpe happily and quietly away. Clare's nature was active and vigorous. She never did anything with half a heart. Her endeavours, therefore, were generally successful ; for whatever

we may in our own cases say in behalf of failures, it is but too certain that lack of will rather than lack of power lies at the bottom of three-fourths of unsuccessful efforts. Clare saw that a great change had come over her home, and that on her it lay to prevent depression and dissatisfaction from settling on its once peaceful surface. This change was not only in the loss of a gay young daughter of the house—not only in a period of extreme quietness following after a period of excitement—there was a greater change. Between her father and herself a barrier was placed—a forbidden subject had arisen. *She* loved where *he* hated. *She* had disappointed him; *he* found it incumbent on him to grieve her. There were allusions which no longer could be made—there were defences of opinions no longer possible to put forward; the free, perfect intercourse of early years was at an



end ; and, having been perfect as it was, the loss was deeply felt.

The change was great, and it required no common behaviour, no common character, to destroy its bad effects. But Clare gave her heart to the work, and what seemed impossible was done. Sir Hugh became as happy as before ; the disunion produced more perfect union ; the disagreement in sentiment more perfect sympathy ; the apparent void was filled by new interests.

Clare's plans were few and simple, but efficacious. Knowing that idleness is the mother of *ennui*, she engaged her father in several long-talked-of, but hitherto neglected, schemes of improvement ; some in the management of his tenantry ; some for bettering the condition of the poor ; some for beautifying the garden at Middlethorpe. Simply saying, that they should both miss Ellen,

and that it would be good to have some new thing to do, she excited his interest at once. He began to plan and think for her sake; he became, as was usual to him, excited for his own.

The painful past was banished; by her cheerful behaviour and eager interest in all that went forward—almost *literally* banished—from Sir Hugh's mind. He, as has been said of Clare, had that child nature which yields to the impressions of the moment, and all the impressions of the moment being pleasurable, he did not, except at rare intervals and in wakeful nights, recur to what was gone by.

The real and inevitable change was in Clare. There are events which, by forcing thought, producing anxiety, and requiring exertion, change in a few days a whole character. A sorrow—a very deep one—may

not always produce such a change, but intense thought and responsibility does. Clare was changed from a girl to a woman—from her free, unconscious life, to

“A being breathing thoughtful breath.”

Duties which hitherto had been done as naturally as she breathed the air of heaven, became matter of reflection and principle. The steps which hitherto had gone right forward, directed only by their own guileless instinct, were now taken warily. “Still upward,” in all their windings—“still upward,” but with the difference of a woman’s footstep up a steep, to the fearless tread of a child.

There is always something sad in this change. There is something so winning and beautiful in impulsive and instinctive virtue, that it grieves one to see it replaced even by

the action of principle and reflection—something so refreshing in the unconscious holiness of youth, that it grieves one to see it drawn into the warfare of the world—struggling, feeling against principle, duty against inclination. Yet, after all, the exercise of his moral qualities is the perfection of man ; and, even when there is bitterness in the cup, surely sweet are the uses of that adversity which awakens the character to its full vigour.

Ellen and Colonel Ashton paid two visits to Middlethorpe: one in the winter; the other, lasting two months, in the latter part of the summer. Ellen would willingly have made a longer stay, for the new home had not yet the charms of the old; but Sir Hugh had strong opinions on this subject.

“My dear child,” he said one day, “you must not suppose I am not happy to have

you here. If I consulted pleasure only, I believe I should keep you at Middlethorpe as long as your good husband would stay ; but there is something I like better than pleasure. Your place is now in your own home, and the more you are in your own place the better. I am now growing old, and perhaps in some ways I see with too prejudiced an eye the ways of the new generation ; but there is one thing I am clear about. I see a restless spirit growing up, a want of excitement and change, which bodes no good to domestic happiness. It will make me happy, therefore, if I leave my daughters to build up homes in the good old style, and to be "keepers at home," as one of our Apostles tells us. Believe me, my dear child, the best thing left on earth, since Paradise, is what we English people call *home*."

Ellen left Middlethorpe about the middle

of September, and was not to return until after her confinement. The event was to take place in the winter, and Sir Hugh had requested that it might take place at Middlethorpe. This, with great reluctance, Colonel Ashton had been forced to refuse, important business compelling him to remain at home at that time. At the first word of business Sir Hugh gave up the point, and would hear of no regrets. Colonel Ashton then made his request—and an urgent one—that Sir Hugh would come to Uskford, but this was also declined. Sir Hugh said he would send Clare and Mrs. Hollis for a week, but he must remain at home.

He did not at that time express his reasons for his refusal; but he had done so early in the year, when a visit to her sister had been proposed by Clare as an equal pleasure to all. "I am getting on in years," he said;

“and how soon my time will be out I don’t know. Perhaps I am a fool to have such an opinion, for so that the spirit flies in the right direction, what matter from what spot it takes its flight; but my feeling is that my old bones would hardly rest in their grave, unless they went to their rest from here. Henceforward, therefore, unless some good duty calls me away, my place is at Middlethorpe. I may be a fool; but men are not machines, and they will have their quirks, and in small matters they may.”

Sir Hugh had been shaken in some degree by the passion and anxiety of the previous year. His nervous system was no longer the iron fabric it had been. His hand shook, and he was liable to starts and excitements he once would have scorned. He was softened also—softened in language and subdued in feeling—more humble and watch-

ful in his own behaviour. With all this, however, he was in excellent health, as robust and active as he had ever been, and as likely to have a long lease of life as any who have passed three score and ten may be. Clare regretted his decision as much for his sake as for Ellen's and her own; but there was no arguing with such an opinion; once expressed the subject was at rest for ever.

On the anniversary of Ellen's wedding day, Mr. Grantley walked up early to call on Sir Hugh. Sir Hugh's mind, tenacious of impressions, was peculiarly liable to be affected by times and seasons, and fearing that depression might arise from the recollections of the occurrences of the past year, Mr. Grantley was desirous to assist Clare in struggling with it. He found Sir Hugh, however, with his workmen, much excited

in the discovery of some old coins, thrown up in the course of the digging caused by his present improvements. He had no thoughts to spare at the moment for any other subject.

Having given his due portion of interest to the coins, and finding his presence in other respects little required, Mr. Grantley went on to call on Clare. He hoped to find her alone. He had some desire to speak with her on subjects connected with the day. These subjects had by her own express desire been hitherto avoided. She had made it a request even to her sister that they should be mentioned no more ; she had felt that kindness and sympathy were not in this case the things that would make her strong ; she had desired to fight her fight in silence, undisturbed by any outward influences. A request so made, had been, however reluctantly, acquiesced in by all ; and seeing her cheerful

countenance, and watching her even temper of mind, Mr. Grantley had for a time admitted the wisdom and propriety of the course. Of late, however, her appearance had distressed him. He had seen her, not when any call required her exertion; but when silent and at rest, with an expression of trouble in her countenance, the more striking because new and uncommon. Efforts for a time are exhilarating in their effects—efforts after a long course of exertion are efforts no more; but there is an intermediate period when they produce on the mind an aching sense of weariness—when every individual effort is felt as a separate burden, and the weight of existence seems to drag at every step a lengthening chain. Mr. Grantley feared that something of this weariness had come to Clare, and he had for some days desired to transgress her orders, should a fit opportunity occur.



He found the drawing-room empty. With an instinctive guess he passed on to Lady Willoughby's room, tapped lightly, and entered. Clare was there, and though not at the moment occupied in its contemplation, Mr. Grantley guessed the subject of her meditations by observing that the curtain before the frame of miniatures was undrawn.

With a smile and a glance of his eyes, he showed that he did so.

Clare blushed and smiled also; then said, "I was not dreaming or repining. Pray do not think so."

"My dear child," he said, with tenderness, "I am very sure you were doing nothing you ought not to do. We all have human feelings, and I don't know that it is desirable we should repress them. I remember enough of the days of my youth to

imagine what your feelings must be—enough, too, I confess, to fear I should never have overcome them as you have done.”

Clare shook her head, without replying to this speech ; but she went towards the little portrait, and said, “ I allow I was thinking of Edward this morning. How like this is, now we know. Don’t you think so ? ”

“ Very like,” he replied, struck at the moment, as all must have been when once the attention was directed to it, by the extraordinary likeness of the man to the child.

“ Only he has not this look now,” she continued sadly ; “ that is what I was thinking. I thought if I could but know that he was doing well I should have nothing else to wish for. I never meant to ask the question. I thought it was better not ; but I have grown anxious of late, and I must. Have you ever



heard of him? Do you know how he passes his time?"

"Indeed I do not, my dear child. He went abroad, as you know, shortly after he left us, and as I have never heard of him since, I suppose he is abroad still. But though I cannot relieve your anxiety by any facts, I can give you my opinion about him. Your cousin will be a valuable member of society in time. How long it may take to discipline that wayward spirit of his, human wisdom cannot guess; but of his ultimate well doing I have no more doubt than of my own. If God spares him a few years longer, which I pray He may do, depend upon it he will win our respect as much as he has done our love. Trust in God, my dear child, all will be right in time."

"I think I do that, perhaps even too much, and yet——"

"We cannot trust too much," Mr. Grantley said seriously.

"But may we not hope too much to have it our own way. I do trust that all will be well with Edward at last, and I try to feel that so, as it is so, I ought to be satisfied; and yet—I don't know how it is—it is not my nature to have melancholy thoughts, but I cannot help it about him—especially of late. They come and I cannot drive them away."

"What thoughts, my dear Miss Willoughby—what do you mean?"

"His character seems so wilful, so stubborn," she said, sadly, "I cannot help feeling that much trial, perhaps great trial, must come to soften it. I have no definite thoughts—I only dread—and feel afraid of the future.

"Now, my dear child," he said, laying his

hand upon her shoulder, "you are really wrong, and this is the first time, I believe, I ever had to tell you so. Why grieve, and fret yourself with needless fears? It may be that your fears are right—who can tell—but if they are so, if trial is to come, God will support him and you; and if not, why bring to-morrow's imaginary burden to oppress to-day. 'Take no thought for the morrow,' when this is acted upon in a right spirit, we know the secret of a happy life."

"I used to feel that, and, I believe," Clare added, smiling, "preach it too. I suppose it is very good for me to know how over confident I was, and how weak I am. With this great fear in the future, I cannot feel as I used to do."

"You must try for it then; you know how. And, for one thing, my dear child, don't shut yourself up,—your feelings I mean,—

too much. I know you do it from a right motive, but it may be over-done. If you are anxious, tell your fears to me."

Clare thanked him, and for the time felt relieved by the expression of her anxiety.

When Mr. Grantley went home he wrote the following letter:—

"DEAR MR. CARADOC,—I do not know why Sir Hugh's antipathies should extend to me. There is no doubt your friend Edward Willoughby behaved in a rash and thoughtless manner. I might use harsher terms, but my conviction is so strong that he meant to do well, that I cannot feel harshly towards him. I am, therefore, seriously anxious regarding his welfare, and having heard little of him since his sudden departure, I write to you for information. We heard, with great regret, from Colonel Ashton of your father's illness. I would

not trouble you with this letter, but that the late accounts have been so much more favourable. I wish I could hope that there was a chance of renewing my acquaintance with you. I often look back to last autumn as a bright spot in my life.

“Believe me, dear Mr. Caradoc,

“With truth and regard, yours,

“EVERARD GRANTLEY.”

In course of time the following answer was received:—

“MY DEAR MR. GRANTLEY,—I wish I could give you the information you desire; but I have heard nothing of Edward for six months. My father’s illness has kept me at Abergeale the whole year, and neither I nor Edward are the best of correspondents. In a few weeks I intend to go to London, and there I hope to meet him. My stay must be short, for though my father is better, I fear

there is nothing but a gradual decline before him. If I can, I shall persuade Edward to return home with me; this wandering life is not good for him. My letter some six months back was dated from some strange place in Norway. I unfortunately lost it, or I would tell you more particulars. In that letter he desired me to be in London in November, and if possible I shall obey him. I was very glad to hear from you, and thank you for your enquiries after my dear father. Pray give my respectful remembrances to Sir Hugh and Miss Willoughby. I wish you had mentioned the latter; I often feel anxious about her. If you think it will give her pleasure, pray tell her that Mrs. Ashton is a great favourite in Monmouthshire; and promises to be as useful at Uskford as her sister is at home.

"Had it not been for my father's state of health, I should have given myself the pleasure of calling on her, as Uskford is only twenty miles from here.

"I remain, dear Mr. Grantley,

"Your very faithful,

"RALPH CARADOC.

"Abergeale, Oct. 16."

Mr. Grantley put the letter into Clare's hands, and though she said nothing except to thank him, he saw that it brought a deeper shadow over her countenance.

CHAPTER IV.

A man's disposition is never well known till he be crossed.

BACON.

ONE day in November, Ralph Caradoc was seated at his writing-table in his lodging in Queen Anne Street.

A sound of a scuffle on the stairs made him raise his eyes, and his door burst open. Edward Willoughby and a square built Welsh boy entered the room at the same moment.

"Ah! my boy," Edward said, laughing, "I beat you hollow, for you got the start.

This boy, Ralph, persisted in calling me a stranger, and would not let me in without sending up my name. He said you would not like it—I said you would—so we had a race.”

“Owen is right in general,” was Ralph’s reply. “I don’t want to be bothered with visitors during my short stay. But Mr. Willoughby, Owen, is an exception.”

The square boy looked discomfited, bowed, and withdrew.

“Well, Ralph, how are you?” Edward said, coming into the room and shaking his hand eagerly. “And how have you left your father?”

“Better. And how are you, Edward?”

Edward did not immediately answer; but seated himself in an arm-chair at a little distance from the writing-table;—the momentary mirthfulness had faded from his counte-

nance, and he looked restless and careworn—the lines had deepened on his brow, and about his mouth the bitter and sarcastic expression was more evident than of yore.

Ralph looked at him anxiously, then in a voice of more earnest inquiry, repeated his question.

“Miserable!” was his answer, in the passionate tones of old.

“My dear fellow, I am very sorry; I had hoped you would have liked your tour. I met a person who gave me a curious account of the manners and customs of the Norwegians, and I hear the scenery is splendid.”

“Never mind my tour,” Edward said, impatiently. “Everything is interesting to those who are interested, and nothing to him who is miserable as I am.”

“True!” Ralph, observed, seriously, “the mind is the thing.”

"Don't moralize, Ralph, but attend to me. Have you got anything to tell me?"

"Nothing, Edward, beyond this letter; I brought it up for you to see." He placed Mr. Grantley's letter in his hand.

Edward read it with knit brows—then put it down. "I tell you what, Ralph, I cannot go on living in this way. There must be some change. Life is unbearable."

"I rather agree with you there, Edward, I think your life is unbearable, I am sure I should find it so." As his companion did not interrupt him, he went on—"You set your mind exclusively on one object—you let it gnaw at your heart, and yet you make no effort to obtain it."

"How do you mean, Ralph?" he said, starting and colouring.

"I told you this once before, Edward. Sir Hugh has a strong feeling about duty ;

he likes the duties, especially the duties of proprietors to be done ; and has a still stronger prejudice against those who escape from their duties and lead a wandering life abroad."

Edward made no reply.

"Your duty, as well as good policy, would lead you to Wetherby. If the tales you used to tell me are true, there would be work enough on your hands."

"I went there," Edward said, with some agitation. "I was there three weeks before I went abroad. I tell you, Ralph, the silence of that house appalled me. I should have gone mad if I had stayed."

Ralph shook his head. "Where are your old wishes of doing good, Edward ? now is the time to put them in practice. You used to tell me of the degraded state of your father's tenantry—the ignorance of the young—the vice among all classes—can you do

nothing here? If you could, you would have calm and pleasant reflections to fill up the loneliness of your home."

"Don't urge me, Ralph, I don't neglect these things; but if I remain stationary now I must be mad."

He threw himself back in his chair, and remained in gloomy silence.

Ralph looked at him for some time, then pondered, then spoke his thoughts. "I have been thinking much lately, Edward," he said, gravely, "how true it is what we often hear from the pulpit; that men's trials are suited to their peculiar dispositions, and that if they use them right, they are the very things that will give health to the soul. Now, for your impatient disposition, I can imagine no harder and yet better discipline than this uncertainty."

Edward looked round at his friend's serious

countenance with some curiosity. "And you, Ralph, who moralize so well, have you trials suited to your disposition?"

"Some few," Ralph replied, colouring; "for one thing, my dear father's sufferings and decline."

"And do you use them profitably, as you would have me do?"

"I do, I hope, in a degree," Ralph replied, with his usual honesty.

"Why, Ralph, what do they do for you?"

"They teach me to dream less about earthly and selfish pleasure," he said, colouring again, but speaking with grave composure; "and in a degree they send my thoughts in that direction." And he waved his hand upwards.

"You wanted no trials, Ralph, to turn your thoughts from yourself," Edward said, with affection. "I do; you are very right

about me. I am a very fit subject for trial ; but the misfortune is, I cannot use it profitably. No matter now, however. I came, not to moralize, but to consult you. How long do you stay in town ?”

“ Four or five days longer, if the accounts continue as good as they have lately been ; and when I go back, Edward, I want you to come with me.”

“ I am going to Middlethorpe first, Ralph. After that, where I shall go, who can tell.”

“ To Middlethorpe ! My dear Edward, you are mad.”

“ If not mad now, I soon shall be so. I must go there, Ralph, and see her, and know my doom. This life, as I tell you, is unbearable.”

“ Wait, my dear Edward, wait and come with me. We have not a gay house, but you shall have comfort and quiet, and domes-

tic affection—and that, I know, is what you need. My sister is a good-natured girl, and my father even now, when he is well enough, is an agreeable companion—well-informed, and far cleverer than I am. Come, Edward, do, and see what domestic life will do for you.”

“Thanks, Ralph, thanks!” Edward said, and stretched out his hand to express his gratitude. “I believe I shall accept your invitation—that is, if But first to Middlethorpe. I must see her first, and know my doom.”

“You know it, Edward; what can you know more?”

“I must have certainty,” he said, with agitation; “some rest for the sole of my foot. This life I cannot and I will not bear. Do you know Spenser’s lines on suitors, Ralph? He may not mean what I mean, but he says, and well, what I feel:—

“ ‘ Full little knowest thou that hast not tried,
What hell it is in sueing long to bide ;
To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent ;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow ;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs ;
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to ronne ;
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.’ ”

“ You would not think those were Spenser’s, would you, Ralph ? no trace of the author of the *Fairy Queen* there.” He spoke the lines with such bitter—such passionate feeling—none could have doubted that he spoke from his heart of hearts.

Ralph looked at him with sorrow and compassion. “ My dear Edward,” he said, “ I pity you from my soul, but yet . . . ”

“ No advice, Ralph ; I did not come for advice ; my mind is made up. I shall go down to-morrow.”

“And when do you return?”

“That must depend on my opportunities and my success. You will wait for me, will you not, unless a better affection than mine calls you away?”

“I will, Edward; but once more, forgive me; be warned—remember your promise. You are too wilful, too venturous. This visit will do no good.”

“No good, Ralph,” he said, his voice for the first time changing to one of softer feeling; “no good to see her again! Ah! Ralph, you little know what it is to ——No matter, let us have done. Come out into this yellow smoke, and enjoy the air with me. My hair must be cut, and so must yours. Come along.”

CHAPTER V.

Cette femme c'était le mélange de la douceur et de l'audace—de la faiblesse des sens, et de la résolution de l'âme.—*Picciola*.

“WHAT a dreary day,” observed Clare to Mrs. Hollis, as on their way to visit a cottager of Sir Hugh's they crossed a wild bit of heath on the outskirts of the Park. “I never remember so dull a November as this has been.”

“November is just as it always is, my dear,” replied her companion, “I see no change.”

"How cold it is—what a piercing wind," Clare observed again, when they had proceeded a few steps further, and she shivered as she spoke.

"It is a bad habit to complain so much, Miss Willoughby—wind and weather are as God appoint."

"Was I complaining?" Clare said cheerfully; "perhaps I was—but I did not mean it."

"If you feel the cold so much, my dear, you had better walk back to the wood and wait for me there. I may be some little time with poor Martha, and Sir Hugh did not wish you to go in."

"I don't mind it indeed," Clare said. "I will walk about and I shall not be cold. Pray don't think of hurrying for me."

"That I should never do, my dear, when sickness is in the case."

Mrs. Hollis entered the cottage. Clare remained outside. It *was* cold, and after meeting for a few seconds the chill blast on her face, she became desirous of exercise.

At about half a quarter of a mile distance stood a clump of trees. They were planted on a bank, at the extremity of the heath, and a part of the plantation sloped into a little dell.

Clare with rapid steps directed her way thither, and when she reached it stopped—glad of the shelter it afforded. She placed herself under an oak still covered with foliage, and leant against the trunk to recover her breath. She was startled by the sound of footsteps on the crisp fallen leaves, and turned hastily round—Edward Willoughby stood before her.

There are occasions when common greetings are superseded by intenser feelings.

There were no greetings here. Edward stood at a little distance irresolute. Clare, after a moment of pain, surprise, and perplexity, said in accents of deepest sorrow, "Oh! Edward, why have you done this?"

"Because my misery is greater than I can bear," he replied passionately.

"But what will this do for you?" she sadly asked.

"Do you ask that, Clare—you do not then feel as I do. To see you, to hear you, is not that enough?"

She made no answer. Hitherto he had remained at a distance. He approached her now, and took her passive hand, and his manner losing its excitement, and his voice its vehemence, he said with tenderness, "How are you, Clare?" his gaze resting fondly on her as he spoke.

Still she made no answer, but tears were

in her eyes. Edward stood silent and quiet—calmed and softened, as if the influence of her presence had already stolen over him.

Clare recovered herself quickly, and, though with gentleness, withdrew her hand. "You must tell me quickly, Edward, why you are come, for I must not stay. Dear Edward, you should not have done it."

"I have not intruded on Middlethorpe," he said, with fresh vehemence. "This heath is free country. I have watched for you for three days. No one knows me. How is it you knew me so quickly?"

She had not observed him narrowly till now. She had met the glance of his eye, and all else had been unperceived. She now discovered that he was wrapped in a farmer's rough coat, and wore a hat of peculiar shape pulled low on his brow.

She shook her head and sighed.

“Why that sigh, Clare?”

“These ways cannot prosper, Edward. As I look at you I feel hope die away, and fear and dread arise. Not fear for our happiness only—but what is far more precious—your welfare. Dear Edward, will nothing teach you that our own wayward will is not the guide we should follow.”

“Clare,” he said with calmness and seriousness, “you perhaps mistake me. This is not a freak. I am come for a purpose, I am come to ask you to give me hope. This life I can no longer bear, give me hope, and I shall be like a new man.”

“What hope?” she asked, sadly; “what can I give? It is not in my hands.”

“It is in your hands, Clare. I ask nothing but what you may give. I ask a simple promise that you will be mine, and none other’s but mine; an assurance, that come what may, we

are in heart and faith united till death us do part. Hear me," he continued, putting up his hand to prevent her interruption, "what I ask is needful for my welfare, for my good in this world, and for ever. Some men can live in suspense—can act on a vague uncertainty—I cannot. My mind sinks beneath uncertainty in hopeless misery. I need help, stimulus, sympathy, to strengthen me to overcome the evils of my nature. Dear Clare, give me this. It is not much I ask. Only one word, one promise that you will never forsake or renounce me; only one assurance that come what may I have a right to your care, and your love, and your prayers; give me this and I can do all things." His voice had a tone of intense pathos in its imploring earnestness.

Clare clasped her hands together in anguish of spirit, but though there was sadness inde-

scribable in her tone and her countenance, there was no irresolution. "I cannot, Edward, dear Edward I cannot do it; I could not do it openly, it would break papa's heart;—in secret I never will."

"You reject me then," he said; and his manner suddenly lost its tenderness, and became gloomy and cold.

"Dear Edward, forgive me—I must"—she held out her hand to him as she spoke. He did not take it. He stood looking at her in silence for a moment—then with increasing hardness, he said,—“Is this your love, Clare—your care for my welfare—do you not know you are driving me to despair?”

The tone of his voice made trust and hope die within her; yet it was not the tone which almost blinded her perceptions of right and wrong. She said gently, but steadily, “I do not indeed drive you to despair; dear

Edward, can you not understand ; there may be hope, though I must not give it ; if not surely better for both of us to be unhappy with a good conscience than miserable without it."

He waited till she had done speaking ; till he saw she had no further concession to make ; then, without word or farewell, as swiftly as Francesca parted from her lover in the "Siege of Corinth," he turned and left her alone. In less than an instant he had disappeared among the stems of the trees in the dell beneath.

For a moment surprise kept Clare silent ; then twice his name rose to her lips, and twice was driven back. What had she to say if she recalled him, but to repeat a resolution that was unalterable. She pressed her hand to her beating heart, to still the wild desires bursting there—and the next

moment he was gone beyond recall—the temptation was past and overcome !

When she returned to the cottage, she found Mrs. Hollis waiting for her, “and had been waiting full ten minutes,” as she informed her with stately acrimony.

“I am very sorry,” Clare said. “I could not help it.”

Something in her tone made Mrs. Hollis look up, and she saw the cheek of her young companion pale, and her eyes red with weeping. Clare blushed deeply as she met her gaze of wonder ; but she bore its inquiry with steadiness.

“What have you been doing, Miss Willoughby ?” Mrs. Hollis asked, gravely ; for though a kind woman, she was no friend to causeless tears.

“I have been talking to my cousin Edward,” Clare replied, simply and sadly.

“Oh! Mrs. Hollis, is he not mad to come here?”

Mrs. Hollis expressed no astonishment at this information, but after some reflection, observed,—“I think Mr. Leigh is extremely selfish in his behaviour.”

“No, not selfish,” Clare cried eagerly, “only too impatient, too thoughtless of what is best.”

“I call it selfish,” repeated Mrs. Hollis; “he comes here to please himself, without considering how annoying his behaviour must be to you.”

Clare said no more. It was the first time she and Mrs. Hollis had spoken on the subject, and her tone was not encouraging to the pity and tenderness with which she herself judged of his wayward conduct.

On entering the house, Clare went straight to her father’s room. She found him at his

writing-table examining his accounts. Her countenance, as he looked up on her approach, prepared him for something unusual, but he was not prepared for what.

She put her arms round his neck, and said, "I come to tell you, Papa, that I met Edward this morning."

Sir Hugh started from his chair, with the blood rushing to his temples, and fire flashing in his eyes. The old expression of hate darkened his countenance. A year, however, of watchfulness and self-examination, had not been altogether fruitless. No outburst followed; he bit his lip and clenched his hand, and drew in his breath—but no word of passion escaped him.

"I knew it would make you unhappy," Clare said sorrowfully, "but he did not mean it. He came because he is miserable, to ask me for a hope I cannot give."

Sir Hugh still remained silent. He would not trust himself to speak.

Clare paused a moment, then summoning resolution, began again. She was grateful for her father's self-control—the effort to attain which, her own agitation prevented her from fully discerning.

“I have made up my mind, Papa,” she said, crushing her hands together, as was a habit when troubled in spirit, “to ask you to give him hope. I mean nothing now; I mean no promise; I mean only this hope, that if ever he makes himself worthy of it, you will pardon him, and take him into your favour. He is so miserable,” she continued, with almost passionate earnestness. “It is not good for a man to be without hope; and it is only common charity to hope for him as for others.”

The effect of the agitation of others is

almost as a natural consequence to calm ourselves. At the sight of his daughter's unusual excitement, Sir Hugh became collected and his manner assumed a fatherly tenderness and dignity which was singularly touching. He stretched out both his hands to her, drew her towards him, and kissed her brow; then spoke his resolution in tones of grave kindness. "My darling Clare, I told you once, that I would rather see you in your grave than the wife of Edward Willoughby. I repeat it now—I would, inasmuch as it is better to fall into the hands of God than into those of a bad man. I will guard you from him while life exists; so only can I fulfil the trust your dying mother left me. I weep for you," and tears did drop from his eyes, "and weep for myself, that my negligence, for it must have been that, should have exposed you to this trial;

but my duty shall be done. For the rest Clare, for your request for my favour, Edward knows as well as you do how he may gain it. He knows, but will not act upon it, or he would not now have been here; he has a selfish, restless, turbulent spirit, guided by no law but his own passion. God help him ! I say that from my heart, Clare ; and God help my poor people when he comes to be master over them. And now, my darling, let there be an end to this ; leave me to myself ; these excitements do not suit an old man like me."

"Forgive me for grieving you," she said, gently, and kissing him, left the room.

The petition had been made on the impulse of an hour's excitement. When the excitement passed away she did not regret that she had made it, but she felt for the first time in full conviction that the case had passed out

of the sphere of natural influences into one above her own and all human control. Her father strong and rigid in his sense of duty—Edward stubborn in resistance to a plain unquestionable truth ; while those two rocks stood fast, and she was powerless to move them, there was no hope. One thing only was clear, her own duty. This must be done with a steadfast mind. All besides was in the hands of God.

This conviction fully felt, seen with the eyes and received into the heart is that which gives peace to the soul. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed in Thee." Nevertheless, this world is the place of temptation. In the trials of life the mind is to be exercised ; therefore even to the most guileless temptations come. There were times when Clare's peace was strongly shaken. There were

hours when the very light of duty was clouded to her eyes. There were times when it seemed to her a sad and sinful thing to drive Edward from his proper refuge into the snares of the world. There were moments when a whispering spirit assailed her, urging her to give him that one word of hope for which he asked, which might be the one word to save him.

There is a wisdom learnt from experience, there is a wisdom leading to the same conclusions which grow instinctively in the hearts of the pure. "Light is sown for the righteous;" they know not whence it comes, but it springs up before them a lantern to their feet. This wisdom taught Clare that it is not in moments of strong feeling, when the eyes are blinded by the mists of passion, and the powers shaken by agitation, that the map of duty should be unrolled and scruti-

nized afresh. In such hours let the conclusions of the saner mind be thankfully accepted as the rule by which the steps should walk. If a new path is to be sought it is by the sober, not the bewildered eyes that it will be found aright. By the light of this hidden wisdom Clare walked blameless through the trials that assailed her. Many a false step—many a life of misery might have been spared by the acceptance of this simple rule.

* * * *

“I have failed, Ralph.” With these words Edward greeted his friend on his return to London. It was twelve hours since he had parted from Clare, but his countenance still wore the look of cold and stubborn pride and resentment it had worn then. It was a look, and the expression of a characteristic not uncommon in his history nor in the his-

tory of any wilful man ; but it was a new expression as connected with Clare.

Edward was the slave of his own will. All men indeed are so in some sense, since the will is the governing power ; yet most men put their will in submission to some laws, either human or divine. But Edward's will reigned paramount ; not that he consciously rejected laws either human or divine ; but governed by his impulses, he supposed those impulses to be just or irresistible. To this will, his own master, he expected others also to yield. Unfortunately for him they had done so. There was that earnestness about him which compels attention, which requires an effort to resist. Even Ralph, with all his estimable qualities, yielded as we have seen. But Edward's will had found at length a match, not in the will, but in the principle, of a young girl. That principle had at first commanded

his admiration, but now overborne by it, it angered him. His will was up in arms, strong, stubborn, resolute—that wayward temper of mind which leads men on to misery.

“I am very sorry, my dear fellow,” was Ralph’s reply; “but I expected nothing else.”

“*Failed*,” Edward repeated, in a voice difficult to describe, so hard, so bitter, so resolved.

“Then, now, Edward, you will come with me.”

“As you please,” was the cold and careless answer.

“I do please,” Ralph said with kindness and compassion. “Let us see what quiet and domestic life will do for you. I think you will like Abergeale. The country is very pretty—not grand and splendid like North Wales, but very pretty. I don’t like to say

too much," he continued, growing warm as he touched a point near his heart, "for you might expect great things, but many people of good taste have spoken with admiration of the scenery. For myself, I never saw prettier, but that may be prejudice."

Edward looked at him with a smile that was not a pleasing one. There was scorn in it of his friend's warmth. He only said, however, "Well, Ralph, let us see then this Welsh world of yours. It will be ugly indeed if it is not a pleasant exchange from this yellow world of London."

CHAPTER VI.

In obedience to what, in agreement, and conformity to what but *temptation* is it, that the far greater part of what men are about is done. See how it despotically commands that man, how it beguiles that other, surprises a third, mingles with the better influences acting on a fourth.

FOSTER'S LECTURES.

It is the opinion of Dr. Johnson, that all men are in some degree insane. This at least is the opinion he puts into the mouth of his sage in Rasselas.

"Perhaps," says Imlac, "if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. All power of fancy over

reason is a degree of insanity, but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any deprivation of the mental faculties."

Whether this be true or not, it is certain that "he must be mad," is the most charitable construction that can be put on some apparently sane men's words and actions, and this charitable hope is the one now required as the only explanation of the actions of Edward Willoughby.

* * * * *

In a long low library of an old house, comfortably furnished, but neither with new fashioned nor in any sense new furniture, sate an old man and a young lady; the old man was stretched in a large invalid chair, and age and infirmity were expressed in his pale face and thin fingers; but though old he looked bright and intelligent, and might have sat for a picture of venerable age.

The young lady was not more than seventeen. She was very pretty, with a fair skin and golden hair, and fine soft features like the Willoughbys. But there was a good deal more of earthly mixture in her countenance. The expression was, indeed, upon the whole, good, honest, and affectionate, but her dark eyes were arch and mischievous, and about her lips there was a look of stubborn will. An observer's eyes could plainly discover that to many good qualities she united the capricious temper of common mortals.

This young lady was the youngest of the Caradoc family, and the only unmarried daughter. Her beauty and her whims had made her from childhood a spoiled and petted child, and since the death of her mother and the marriage of the last sister, she had reigned with supreme authority at Abergeale. Indulgence and independence had left her

much as nature made her, hot-tempered, wilful, and impatient of control; but in other respects a good girl, perfect as a daughter, kindhearted, generous, and affectionate, and much beloved by all who approached her.

"Now Papa, this is Ralph's letter," she said, after having placed her father in comfort for the morning, and taken her usual seat close to his side, "I must read it to you—but first I must tell you there is some news in it."

"Good news?" said Mr. Caradoc, smiling.

"I call it good news, because it is about a person I have always wished to see—but I don't know what you will say, Papa. She read:—

"My dearest Lilia,—Thank you a thousand times for your most welcome letter,' that was because I told him how well you were Papa; 'I did not answer it yesterday because I could not then fix the day of my

return ; my father said before I left Abergeale, that he had no objection to my bringing Edward Willoughby back with me. I put off my journey, that I might induce him to come. I am happy to say I have succeeded, and I hope we shall both be at Abergeale on Thursday evening, in time for dinner ; you must have a comfortable room ready for him. I leave it to you to choose, only I should be glad that it was not far from mine. I must tell you, my dear Lilia, that he is not in good spirits, you must not therefore be surprised at his being more silent and less agreeable than I have sometimes described him to you. I bring him down because I think it will do him good to be in a home. You are a good-natured girl, my dear Lilia, and I hope you will bear with him, and make him as comfortable as you can. I am not afraid of his being an annoyance to my father, for he is very quiet, and everybody, I think, is pleased

with his company. I hope to find all well. I have done all my father's business, and I shall be truly glad to be at home again. I went to Hendon yesterday to see Editha, she and the child are getting on well; she hopes before long to come to Abergeale. Give my love to my father.

“ ‘Your affectionate brother,

“ ‘RALPH CARADOC.’

“Papa, do you think Ralph will ever marry?” was Lilia's question when the letter was read.

“I hope he will,” was Mr. Caradoc's reply. “When you marry, Lilia, Abergeale will be a dull place for him.”

“I don't mean to marry,” Lilia replied, adding, without noticing the sadness of her father's countenance, “I mean to stay at home and take care of you; but the reason I asked that question, was because of Mr.

Willoughby; I think he does as well as a wife for Ralph. I am sure he could not think about a wife as he does about him; nothing but Mr. Willoughby; there is no room for any one else in Ralph's heart."

"Ralph is a good friend to him," observed her father, thoughtfully.

"If secrecy makes a good friend, as Lord Bacon said in that Essay we read last night, then Ralph is a good friend. Though he speaks of Mr. Willoughby, and dreams of Mr. Willoughby, yet I know nothing about him. I know he is not a tall man, and I guess he is an obstinate one, but that is all. In vain I question; Ralph tells me nothing. Now, Papa, are you not curious to see him?"

"I advise you not to let your thoughts run on Mr. Willoughby, or any other young man, my little Lilia."



"And why not, Papa?" Lilia said, drawing herself up.

"Because he may not let his thoughts run upon you."

"I should hope not, indeed," she said scornfully. "Why Papa, if any one should ever wish to let their thoughts run on me, they must come creeping on their knees in the dust to ask my permission, and then I shall say 'No!'"

Her father stroked her head and smiled, and called for his usual morning's reading.

The two young men arrived according to appointment.

There is at all times something soothing to the restless in the sight of a happy, quiet home. There was something peculiarly soothing in the Caradocs, from their extreme simplicity and unworldliness. The old man was intelligent and well-informed, and Lilia was

talkative, with youthful spirits; but in the conversation of both there was the same out-of-the-world vein. No common hackneyed topics, but fresh springs of the moment, whether weighty or trivial, as they chanced to well up in the old and the youthful mind. Edward was soothed and taken by the charm, and laying aside the perturbations of his spirit, entered heartily into the enjoyment, making himself pleasant alike to the old and the young.

At the end of the evening when Lilia had seen her father comfortably placed in bed, and left him disposed to sleep, she went to her brother's room; Edward was sitting there.

She paused at the door for a moment, then entered, blushing a little, as she said with careless frankness, "Now this is hard, I must say."

"It is hard, I confess," Edward said, jumping up and much amused, "but don't be afraid. I am much too tired to bother Ralph any longer;" and, wishing them both good night, he left the room.

"There was no particular reason that Mr. Willoughby should go," Lilia observed, "except that I came to talk about him."

"What did you come to say?" Ralph inquired; "how do you like him, Lilia?"

"Very much," she replied, "he is quite as agreeable as I expected."

"I am glad you like him," Ralph said, heartily; "we must try and make him at home here, Lilia. I want him to be happy and comfortable; we must not bother him with attention, but treat him like one of ourselves, that's the way: I know Edward well—he hates formality."

"I will do my best," Lilia said, "for I am

very glad he is come. I think he is good-natured. He treated papa very nicely. just what I like. But Ralph, I really don't see these bad spirits you talk of?"

"You must not judge by one night, Lilia: Edward was pleased and excited to-night, and then he is another man. Perhaps you will not believe me when I tell you, that he never spoke from the time we left Oxford this morning till we changed horses at Monmouth this evening."

"What is he unhappy about?" Lilia asked, with determination to have an answer.

"My dear Lilia, ask me anything you please about my own affairs, but my friend's are sacred."

"But you have no affairs to satisfy me with, have you, Ralph?"

"Not much, Lilia, I confess."

"Is this unhappiness from what people

call in books a disappointed attachment? Now, dear Ralph, do tell me that."

"Well, well, Lilia, something of the kind; you see you ought not to ask."

"I think I rather wonder at the young lady that refused him. What sort of a girl is she?"

"Lilia!" he said, warningly.

"And so Mr. Willoughby *really* is unhappy; is it so, Ralph?"

"Yes really, Lilia, very unhappy; and if you find him impatient sometimes, and depressed, and not willing to be amused with you, you must think of that, Lilia, and bear with him."

"Has he any hope?" she asked again, as she twisted the extinguisher of the candle in her hands.

Ralph shook his head and sighed — a compound sigh produced by many feelings; but

his answer was to take his incorrigible sister by the shoulders, and push her to the door.

“Lilia, you are too bad; you make me unkind.”

“No, I don’t do that,” she said laughing, as she raised her face to his to wish him good night—“nor ever should.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"Let what will fall,
That which is past who can recall?"

GEORGE HERBERT.

"You have known Edward Willoughby for so many years, Ralph, that I suppose you can entirely trust him?" was old Mr. Caradoc's question one day to his son.

Ralph stared at his father as he sometimes stared at Edward's wild speeches.

"I suspect no harm of him, Ralph;" said the father smiling, "I only wish to be

assured that Lilia's happiness would be safe in his hands."

"My dear father, what do you mean?"

Ralph exclaimed, in increasing surprise.

"I fancy that they are likely to become attached to each other, that is all."

"Indeed father you are quite mistaken. Edward is attached to some other person, and has long been so."

Mr. Caradoc looked grave. "If you know this, Ralph," he said after a moment; "of course I am mistaken; but I wish you would take an opportunity to tell Lilia the fact. Poor little girl, she may lose her heart, and find it out too late."

"My dear father, Lilia knows it as well as I do. She is such a curious girl, she got it out of me the first night Edward came."

"Oh, then all is right," said Mr. Caradoc,

looking much relieved; and, as he entirely rested on Ralph's good judgment, he dismissed the subject from his mind.

N t so Ralph. Though he had answered with perfect conviction, he had no sooner answered than an uneasy feeling took possession of him, and he determined to be on the watch.

This conversation took place about five weeks after Edward had been domesticated at Abergeale.

Lilia had attended to Ralph's request that Edward might be made to feel at home; and from the first had treated him like one of themselves. She soon saw that Ralph was right, and that his variable spirits betokened a mind ill at ease, and she assorted herself to his moods with ready kindness. If he was gay, she talked to him; if he was gloomy, she let him alone; if more than commonly

depressed, she sometimes endeavoured, with a gentleness usual only in her behaviour to her father, to rouse and cheer him. The consequence of this attention naturally was, that she thought too much of him; the consequence of thinking too much, was the natural one—she lost her heart to him. Edward had been but three weeks at Abergeale when she became conscious of this, and with the consciousness came the determination to win him. Lilia was proud and not disposed to love in vain; she was also generous, and instead of scorning, as some proud natures do, a rejected heart, she desired to comfort him. Both feelings pointed in the same direction. Edward was to be won, and Lilia set about her task.

It must be confessed it was not laborious to her; the wilful spoiled child knew well enough how to catch attention; and if strong

feeling interfered at times, bringing with it a degree of embarrassment, that weapon was by no means less effective than her coquettish and capricious airs. Whatever she did had a grace of its own, and the most indifferent watched her with pleasure.

One charm she had on which she did not calculate, and yet if Edward was to be attracted, that was the charm by which he would be won. This was her devotion to her father. From the first day of their acquaintance he had watched her as she sate by his side, feeling a kind of insensible pleasure in the recollections that devotion afforded. An *insensible* pleasure because it was not a permitted one. He was angry with Clare, and in his own judgment did well to be angry; and with a resolution peculiarly his own, he set his face against every thought of tenderness. She had

resisted the pleadings, not of his love, he thought he could have forgiven that, but his passionate pleadings for his soul's welfare: she could not, therefore, truly love him; and like Lilia, he was not disposed, in his present mood at least, to love in vain. Lilia's attentions, therefore, fell on no unfertile soil; that the soil was utterly without desire for, or consciousness of, such attentions, made it no less likely they might take root.

Ralph became watchful, and saw enough to cause anxiety for his sister. Her desire to engage Edward's attention was evident; and there was a wish to please and a deference to his opinion which Ralph had never seen in her before. He felt pained and angry, and determined to interfere. On Edward's side he saw little to find fault with. At times indeed, he suffered himself to be attracted; but at others, in spite of

Lilia's utmost efforts, he remained absorbed in thought. Ralph felt certain of his present unconsciousness, but not the less he knew his position to be a dangerous one.

Finding Lilia alone one afternoon, he began bluntly, "Lilia, I am going to find fault with you."

"I am glad you give me warning, Ralph," she said lightly, "for now I shall go away. I thought you knew I did not like to be found fault with."

"Then you should not give me cause," he replied, gravely. "I don't like your behaviour, Lilia."

"And what in my behaviour don't you like?" she asked, colouring with anger.

"I don't like your behaviour to Edward; you do not show that modesty and backwardness which I think a young woman ought to show."

"How dare you speak in such a way?" she cried passionately; and certainly poor Ralph had gone very injudiciously to work.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Lilia," he said, kindly, "you must forgive my bungling tongue, if I use words you do not like. I mean to speak for your good, and you must take the good intention, and excuse the rest."

"But what do you mean?—what have I done?—what do I do? You told me to treat him like one of ourselves."

"So I did. I suppose I made a mistake. I am very sorry, my dear Lilia. I never meant to lead you astray. I think, though," he continued, after a moment, "that there is a difference, and you ought to know that difference better than I do."

"What do I do?" she asked, imperatively, "I wish to be told what it is."

"That is rather difficult to tell," Ralph said, shaking his head. "I feel it, but I can't describe it. I think you try to make him pay you attentions which he is not disposed to show."

"Ralph, you are too unkind," she cried, colouring crimson.

"I don't mean to be unkind, I only mean to warn. Remember you are very young, and you have no woman friend to tell you what is right. If you had a mother, Lilia, I would not speak. As it is, I will not see you do wrong without giving you the best advice I can."

Lilia was touched and cast down her eyes.

"If you cared for Edward, Lilia, it would be a bad business; but though it would grieve me more in some ways, it would not offend me so much. It does offend and

grieve me now, I confess. I did not think a sister of mine could behave like a coquette."

Lilia's colour rose deeper and deeper while he spoke ; at length tears burst from her eyes, and she exclaimed, " And who told you, Ralph, that I do not care ?"

" My dear Lilia," he cried, aghast.

" I do care," she continued, passionately, and her tears fell like a torrent.

" My dearest Lilia," he said again, with the utmost tenderness, and put his arm round her waist.

" Never mind," she cried in a moment, extricating herself from his grasp ; " I should not have said it if you had not judged me so harshly."

" I beg your pardon, my dearest Lilia," he said gently, his honest, perplexed, compassionate face a perfect study for a physiognomist, " I never dreamed of this. I

thought you knew—I am sure I told you—Edward loves another person.”

“Is he engaged?” she asked, pressing her hand for a moment on her beating heart—a movement Ralph did not perceive, or he might have been more guarded and explicit in his reply.

“No,” he said, hesitating, “not engaged; but my dearest Lilia, that makes no difference. I tell you, Edward loves her with all his heart and soul. It is *impossible* he can love you.”

Lilia made no answer.

“I cannot say, Lilia, how I blame myself. I should not have brought him here in this way. I ought to have known how taking he is. I am very sorry. What can I do to comfort you?”

Lilia drew herself up a little proudly, but still she said nothing. She was stand-

ing in the window looking out into the garden, with her face turned from Ralph. While they stood in silence, Edward passed. He only smiled and went on ; but Lilia's colour deepened to scarlet.

Ralph saw it spreading even over her neck and hands, and sorely grieved and perplexed in mind, yet always resolute in right, he went towards her and said, "Lilia, you must conquer this."

"Perhaps I can't," she said, trying to speak lightly, but trembling as she spoke.

"Everybody *can* do what they must. I know by experience, dear Lilia, that such feelings can be conquered. It may be hard ; but it can be done."

"*You*, Ralph !" she said, turning and looking at him with surprise.

"Yes," he said, steadily, "I have had to do it, and it is done."

Lilia said no more, but turned again to the window.

"You must try, dearest Lilia," Ralph said, again putting his arm affectionately round her. "As soon as possible I will take Edward away. I suppose it will be hard for you to get over it while he is here; but we must not do anything that will seem strange; and now I will not preach any more. Go to your room, dearest Lilia, and think and resolve; and God bless you," and he kissed her and walked away.

If Ralph had known a little more of human nature, and Lilia's nature, he would have based his arguments on another foundation than the impossibility of Edward loving her. He would have said, "You would not wish to gain another's right," and a generous heart would have been conquered at once. But, the fact was, the sight of

Lilia's unhappiness, put every thought but that of her peace from his mind; his only desire was to comfort and relieve her. He blamed himself, blamed and grieved, and went out for a solitary walk, in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

As the door closed on Ralph, the clock struck four. It was the hour for Mr. Caradoc's return to the library, after his afternoon's repose. Pains and perplexities were banished from Lilia's mind. She flew to him. Nothing ever stood in the way of his comforts.

This was a bad day with him. His rest had been broken the previous night; and he was depressed and drowsy. Lilia sate by his side, cheering him with her gay conversation—and its soothing effects were shortly visible—he fell into a profound slumber. The day had closed in and the shutters were

shut ; but they had been sitting in the bright firelight, and the candles were not lit. Lilia's hand was on her father's, when he fell asleep ; she feared to move it now. Silent and unemployed, she sate watching him. About a quarter of an hour had passed when Edward entered. Lilia raised her unoccupied hand to her lips to bid him be still ; he obeyed, and softly closing the door, came and sate down opposite to her. The slumber continued for above an hour—Lilia never spoke or stirred. She was sorry for the restraint she imposed on Edward, but her father's repose must not be disturbed.

Edward sate in silence, in a kind of dreamy and yet observant thoughtfulness. He watched Lilia—her filial devotion brought, as it had often done, softening thoughts with it ; but this day, there was more of Lilia herself in his mind. A pleasant mood stole

over him. After the hardness and resentment he had been so much cherishing, this mood of softness and tenderness was grateful—grateful as a spring-like day after frost and snow. He did not observe the course of his thoughts, but yielded to their pleasant and soothing impressions. He watched Lilia—her attitude, and that of her father, made a beautiful picture;—the firelight gave a Rembrandt-like depth to the light and shade, while the expression of Lilia's fair countenance, on which the brightest light was shining, would have required a higher and diviner artist to pourtray. He watched, and yielded to the flow of his feelings—yielded as Edward ever did, yielded, till the impulse of a moment governed his life.

There was no change, no word spoken, till Ralph entered; his heavy footstep then awoke Mr. Caradoc—and the dream was over.

In the course of the evening, Lilia, according to her custom, went to the pianoforte. Mr. Caradoc loved music, and Lilia sang and played prettily. He and Ralph entered into some discussion on politics. Edward listened, and occasionally joined for a time, but the halo with which he had invested Lilia was not yet dispersed, and his fancy was with her. He followed her at length to the pianoforte, and sate down behind her—but he did not speak. Ralph glanced uneasily round at the movement, and without exciting his father's observation, managed to keep his eye upon them.

Lilia was the first to speak. Edward was sitting behind her with folded arms—he was yielding to, almost courting a return of his pleasant impressions. She turned to him, suddenly, at the conclusion of a song, and said—"I was sorry to be so uncivil this

afternoon, but papa was not well, and I could not help it."

"Surely you do not mean to treat me like a stranger," Edward said, reproachfully, rising from his seat, and approaching her more nearly.

"You must have been very tired of it," Lilia said, trying to speak lightly, but with a hurried tone in her voice, "I hoped you would go to sleep as Ralph would have done, but I don't think you did."

"If I did," Edward said, with his sweet, peculiar smile, and speaking in that softened tone which so changed his voice, "I had pleasant dreams—I was thinking of you; comparing you to a person who is perfect, if there is perfection on earth."

Touched and affected, Lilia cast down her eyes and blushed deeply. After the pain and disappointment of Ralph's words, these words of Edward's, how little soever they

might mean, however full of another they might be, were precious words. Edward looked at her; and as he gazed, saw, in the fringes of her long lashes, a tear gather and fall. The sight gave him a strange feeling, and hardly conscious of what he was about to do or say, he stooped towards her to speak again, but before a word escaped his lips, a hand, with no gentle touch, was laid on his shoulder, and Ralph's voice, hoarse and loud, arrested him—

“Come this way, Edward, I beg of you, and just give us your opinion on this point.”

Edward suffered himself to be led back. The necessity for doing so did not however appear, as no point of importance seemed to be under discussion.

Edward was saved for this time, but there is truth in the old saying, “A wilful man must have his way.”

He had not been long in his own room that night, before Ralph knocked at the door and entered. Edward was sitting by the fire, reading. He had great power over his own mind; if he did not choose to think on any subject, he did not think. He could not but be in some degree aware that he and Lilia were on dangerous ground; for though little conscious of the attraction of his softened moods, and little able therefore to estimate or calculate the effects of what he said or did, he yet had felt enough that day to leave an impression behind. He knew that before him lay a course of action, on which, if thought was exercised, a decision must be made. He did not choose to think; and with an exertion of his strong will, thought was banished.

Ralph entered looking grave, awkward, and perplexed. He came and stood by the

fire without speaking, and cleared his throat three times.

Edward looked at him with amazement. "Well, Ralph," he said at last, laughing, "to what am I indebted for this interesting visit?"

"I want to speak to you, Edward; but what I have to say is awkward, particularly to me. I don't know how to set about it."

Edward felt, but would not acknowledge, a twinge of fear. He only said, "Well, Ralph, I can wait. Perhaps I had better go on with my studies, that you may have leisure for thought."

"What I have got to say, Edward, is a grave matter. I wish you would not laugh. I believe I had better say it out. I wish you would talk less to Lilia. She is very young, and it won't do."

In spite of himself Edward coloured deeply, and said, "Don't talk nonsense, Ralph; what won't do?"

“It is a very difficult thing for me to say,” Ralph continued, gravely; “but when it is right to speak I don’t mind. I think Lilia is growing to like you too much. I did think it was her fault, and I told her to-day that it was, and told her how impossible it was you could ever love her; but to-night I think it was your fault. I heard what you said to her, and I tell you, Edward, it is not right. She is very young, and I must take care of her, and I will not have her feelings played with. She may be giddy, and she may draw you on; I think she has done it, for though she is my sister, and I love her dearly, I can see her faults; but she is but young, and you, Edward, ought to know better than to trifle with her.” Ralph had grown warm while he spoke, and his words came out with vehement earnestness.

Edward heard him to the end. The first

emotion had been a throb of pleasure—man's vanity, or something better than vanity, in hearing of Lilia's love; it was followed by a far acuter throb of pain—so acute that it was repelled. When Ralph ceased to speak, his countenance had settled into rigidity.

“Now, Ralph, you have done your duty,” he said: “that is enough—leave me to myself.”

“No, Edward, not yet. I see that in your face which makes me afraid. Dear Edward, be warned. A day—an hour—may destroy your peace for ever. Lilia is my dear sister, and with all her faults as good a girl as ever lived; but she is no more fit to make you happy, Edward, than I am fit to make a queen.”

Was it only Edward's nature, or is it too common a feature in human nature in general for warnings to cause anger first and then per-

sistence in ill? It has been remarked, on a very solemn occasion, that it was not till Judas was warned of what he was about to do that he was fully armed to do it; and one conversant in man's nature has remarked on this as the strange, yet too common result of warnings on a human being's wayward heart.

"That will do, Ralph," he said, stubbornly; "now you may leave me. Good night."

Ralph looked hurt, and held out his hand. Edward made no objection, and shook it with a kind of indifference.

Forced to withdraw, Ralph retreated sadly to his own room. He thought it best to leave Lilia to herself. As far as he could tell, his advice had only made matters worse. He sate down by his fire in discomfort and depression; and when at last he went to



bed and to sleep, his sleep was troubled with a vision of Clare, sad and pale, desolate and forsaken, and he the cause.

Edward likewise passed a restless night, and woke early and unrefreshed. It would be an impossible task to describe the state of his mind. On one side was the temptation of Lilia's love—this unsought love—so healing to his vanity, so soothing to his wounded spirit: there were all the pleasant impressions of the previous day, passing like summer breezes over his restless slumber; there was a desire for rest, simply and in itself, for an end to suspense, for a home, and the soothing, softening cares of domestic life. On the other was his love for Clare, his bitter resentment, and his wilful spirit up in arms. These latter impressions were painful and troubled when contrasted with the former ones. Edward turned from them; yet,

while he yielded to the more consoling thoughts, the thoughts connected with Clare pursued him still—fastened upon him with desperate energy, would not let him go : he became angered, and with an exertion of more resolute will set his face the other way.

It was from a night so passed in struggle and warfare that he arose early and unrefreshed. Morning brought no calmness with it. To escape from himself he went downstairs.

The hours at Abergeale were moderately early. Ralph read prayers at nine, and breakfast followed immediately after. Everything was conducted with the utmost order and punctuality. Edward had been pleased upon the whole. Spirits like his, though they rebel against laws, often find a pleasure in submission to them when they must. He had, however, often playfully remonstrated on the likeness of Ralph's laws to those



of the Medes and Persians, and the stretch of his punctuality had usually consisted in being just too late.

This morning it was early, not much past eight. Edward went into the library, and, undismayed by some impatient waves of a housemaid's duster, sate himself down. He had his own will, as was his custom. After a few surprised and indignant glances, housemaid and duster disappeared, and he remained alone. He turned over a few books—read a few pages—opened the window, found it cold and closed it, then again sate himself down and resumed his desultory studies. Anything to escape from himself and his own meditations.

Presently Lilia appeared. She came from her father's room which opened into the library from the opposite side. She stopped and blushed with surprise on seeing Edward,

then merely saying, "Good morning," hurried on. When she reached the further door, Edward suddenly pursued and arrested her. On small things men's lives depend. Nothing is little or great. Edward's early rising, and Lilia's passage through the room, were events too trifling to be noticed, yet on them hung his life's history. Why he stopped her, when the words were spoken, he did not know; he followed an impulse,—she seemed to be thrown in his way at that moment that his wilful spirit might be indulged to the utmost.

"Lilia, stop!" he said, unconsciously calling her by her name; "I want to speak to you."

He called her Lilia unconsciously, but she remarked the change, and blushed deeply. His manner had not the softness of the previous evening, yet she could scarcely doubt



that he loved her. Ralph was wrong—it was not impossible—and hope beat high in her heart.

She came back shyly and silently, and he made her sit down ; then he left her and walked restlessly backwards and forwards to the window. At last he seemed to come to some resolution, and he returned to her.

“Lilia,” he inquired, “do you know my history?”

“A little,” she replied, trembling and embarrassed, “not all.”

“But you know thus far that I have loved with all my heart and soul another person—have loved, and still do love her—yes, Lilia, you shall know the truth. I have loved, and vainly I deceive myself, I love her still.”

Poor Lilia’s colour ebbed away. One moment so full of hope, the next every hope dead ; even the proud spirit could not entirely conceal what she felt.

Edward saw her pale cheek, and his manner lost its collectedness. "Dear Lilia," he said, with tenderness, "listen to me a little further. Dear Lilia, do you, indeed, love me? I have told you all that you may know the truth; I am here to ask your love, but there shall be no deception, you shall know before you decide. The love I have sought I cannot have—she whom I love does not love me as I would be loved—I am cast out, forsaken, lonely, and desolate. I cannot bear my life. I want a friend, a companion, one to help me and cheer me, one to do me good and keep me from evil. Dear Lilia, I do love you; not with a love worthy of you, but enough. Will you be this one to help me? Will you be *my wife*?"

My wife. As he spoke the words, scales fell from his eyes; the mist of passion in which he had wrapped himself dissolved, and

he knew what he had done. With the vividness of a vision, a former scene rose before him, those same words rang upon his ears, Clare was in his sight, in his brain, in his heart; he knew all he had felt and did feel, all his love for her and none but her. A shudder ran through his whole frame, an expression of unutterable agony convulsed his features,—but it was too late.

Lilia's eyes were cast down, and of these emotions she saw nothing. After a moment's silence, she put her hand in his and simply said, "I will."

Edward could not speak. To conceal the anguish, the bewilderment of his mind, he stooped, and softly kissed the hand he held, and then again there was silence. He tried to say he thanked her, but his lips refused to utter the vain words. He cast his eyes about seeking for escape—escape not for

the moment, but for life—but it was too late.

“What is that?” he cried, in a startled voice, suddenly dropping her hand and rushing to the window. Lilia followed him in alarm.

One of the library windows looked out upon the road that approached the house. Edward stood on the seat and gazed out. “There is nothing,” he said, “how strange! I thought I heard a horse galloping at full speed, and that always startles me.”

“I will see,” Lilia said, and glad to escape, hurried out of the room.

Edward remained alone—alone with his misery. He dared not face it. He was a coward before the thoughts that were rising so rapidly, before the passion that was burning within him. He crossed his arms and walked with resolute tread down the room.

“These thoughts are too late,” he said, “let

them go. They are guilty, now, I will not indulge them." And with a deep drawn breath he banished them.

The bell rang for prayers. They were always read in the library. Edward walked to the fire-place and warmed himself. He endeavoured to be natural, to be as if nothing had happened; he warmed his fingers and rubbed them, keeping his eye on the door that he might be found so doing.

The door slowly opened and Ralph entered, but not as usual, followed by Lilia and a train of servants. He entered alone and closed the door after him.

He looked white and grave, and his fingers nervously held a letter sealed with a large black seal.

He came up to Edward and said, "I am afraid, my dear fellow, I shall shock you; a man has just come here to fetch you—an

express from Middlethorpe—poor Sir Hugh is dead.”

Ralph said in after years that Edward’s countenance at that moment he never could forget. The expression that passed over it, was one in which a whole life of suffering was contained. He did not then know all it meant.

He hastened to speak again. “It happened five days ago, Edward, for it seems the express went to London to look after you, and not finding you went back to Middlethorpe. The man says he believes the funeral is to be to-morrow, so you must go at once. Poor, poor, Miss Willoughby,” and tears sprang into Ralph’s eyes.

Edward clutched his arm, and his face became livid. Ralph, in alarm, rang the bell and went to the door to call for some wine, but before the bell was answered,

Edward, with one of his resolute efforts, had mastered himself. "Don't, Ralph," he said, calmly, "there is no need. How far is it to Middlethorpe, eighty miles, is it not? That is easily done. You must order me a chaise as soon as possible, that is all."

"It is done, Edward. I knew you would wish to be off, and I told your servant to pack."

"Thanks, Ralph. Then now have prayers. Don't let your household be disturbed for me."

Ralph complied in some surprise at Edward's recollection.

When this was over, Edward begged Ralph and Lilia to go to breakfast, and said he would join them shortly. He then disappeared, taking with him his unopened letter.

He did not return again till the chaise and

four came to the door. He then sate down and drank some coffee, and asked a few questions regarding his route.

Lilia's shyness was overcome by anxiety and regret. She looked at him and his suffering countenance till she could not see for her tears, and then she rose and stood at the window.

In a few minutes the servant came in to say all was ready. Edward then got up, and his cheek, which had been ashy white, became suddenly crimson ; but he went steadily to the window—took Lilia's hand in both of his, and said distinctly, "Good bye, Lilia. It may be some time before I come again—till then, think kindly of me, and God bless you."

Ralph stood aghast, but Edward permitted no questions. He shook his friend's hand with a strong grasp, and said, "Thanks,

Ralph, for all your care of me. Thank your father for his kindness. God bless you all;" and he jumped into the chaise and drove away.

Lilia stood in the window weeping bitterly. Her feelings were violent, and never had known control. She yielded to them without restraint. Her love for Edward was great; but sadness and sorrow seemed to hover over the joy of her growing hopes.

Ralph came up to her gravely. "Dear Lilia," he said, "what is this?"

She made no answer; indeed she could not.

"Has Edward spoken to you, Lilia? Are you engaged to him?"

She bowed her head.

Ralph stood by her, sad, silent, and perplexed. At length he kissed her gravely, and said, "May you be happy, dearest Lilia,

and forgive me for having offended you yesterday. I spoke for Edward's good and yours ; but it seems I was mistaken. No wishes for his and your happiness can be greater than mine."

"I know that," she said, through her tears, and, throwing her arms round his neck, she disappeared.

After much thought, Ralph decided to say nothing. It was no case, he felt, for interference. Edward only could decide on what was to be done. Sad at heart he went about his usual tasks, haunted perpetually by the vision that had troubled his slumbers the previous night.

CHAPTER IX.

“Oh ! that fear

When the heart longs to know, what it is death to hear.”

CHOLY.

WE must go back for a short time.

The beginning of January found Clare and Mrs. Hollis starting on their journey to Uskford. Clare had never left her father before, and went reluctantly ; but he and Colonel Ashton and Ellen all wished it, and she made no opposition. In all respects but one she herself also was desirous to go.

Mr. Grantley left his house and came up to pass the week with Sir Hugh. "You may be quite easy, my dear child," he said to Clare. "I will take as much care of your father as you would do yourself, and if anything goes astray, I will send post haste and fetch you back again. Depend upon it, though we shall miss your company, we shall do very well together. Go in peace, and don't give way to needless anxieties."

The travellers left Middlethorpe early in the morning, and arrived before dinner time at Uskford. They were met in the bright light of the hall by Colonel Ashton, with a face brighter still. He came to them with the good news that Ellen had been confined that morning, and that she and her little girl were both far better than could be expected. It was a happy moment to Clare. Mrs. Hollis, though she expressed her gratitude



for Ellen's well doing, was evidently a little disappointed, and in some slight degree offended. "Whatever is best," she remarked; "but I confess I should have preferred to be in time."

A day or two passed happily. Uskford was a pretty place, whose beauties survived the frost and cold of Christmas. Clare was pleased with it, and said, with a smile to Colonel Ashton, "If Ellen was obliged to leave Middlethorpe, I really think she could not have done better than come here."

In the course of one of her walks with Colonel Ashton, he shewed her a pretty and picturesque little house which stood within the Park. "This house was built by my mother," he said, as he pointed it out, "for a favourite governess, who married an engineer in this neighbourhood. She died at a great age last year, and I am looking about

for a new tenant. It is so near us that I am obliged to be particular; but I do not like to see it empty. You must think for us and find us a pleasant neighbour if you can."

"Any one might be happy there," Clare said, and she looked at it with interest.

They went home, and after taking off her walking things Clare proceeded by appointment to Ellen's room, to see the baby dressed in smart clothing. The nurse had remonstrated, but the young mother had insisted, and was now holding her child in her arms, covered with lace, to exhibit its beauties to her sister.

Clare sate down by her sister's bed, and they were left alone. The baby was a pretty child with dark hair and soft small features. Ellen gazed at it with intense admiration, and after speaking of all her happiness and all she had to be thankful for she said, "In

fact, Clare, there is only one thing in the world that I have to wish for."

"And what is that, Ellen?" Clare said smiling.

Ellen looked at her sister for a minute, and then said, "Only, dear Clare, that you were as happy as I am."

Tears came into Clare's eyes for a moment, but she drove them away. "You must not think I am unhappy," she said, earnestly.

"Not very happy, Clare. Don't think you deceive me. You are not at all what you used to be."

"I am like you, Ellen," she said, with a faint smile. "I have only one thing to wish for, and that is that Edward was happier. If he was happy I should be happy myself."

"Dear, dear Papa," Ellen said, earnestly, "I do not like even in thought to blame him, but if only he could be just."

"Ah, Ellen," Clare said, sadly, "is he so unjust? Perhaps he is right; perhaps Edward is altogether wrong. If I could feel sure about Edward, I should not be anxious or unhappy, but he frightens me. I told you that he came lately to Middlethorpe; since then I have had strange fears and terrors about him; he is so wilful, so impatient, I have a dread that he will altogether go astray."

"I think not," Ellen said, decidedly, "he loves you, Clare, and that will keep him from all evil. I am not afraid for him, but I am afraid for you. You don't know how thin you are grown — you are quite changed since we were at Middlethorpe."

"It has been all very good for me, Ellen," Clare said, seriously. "I used to think I was very strong, and now I know I am very weak, and I never knew before how hard it was to feel what we all know and what I

thought I did feel, that God's will must be best. I suppose we should be glad to learn this. And now don't let us talk of this any more. Indeed I don't like it."

They still continued talking, though the subject was changed, till Colonel Ashton came into the room. He looked very grave as he came in, so grave that Ellen asked laughingly, "if he was angry with her?"

He then smiled a little and said, he thought she and Clare had been talking long enough. Clare immediately got up, and in spite of Ellen's resistance left the room. Colonel Ashton followed her, telling Ellen he should send the nurse to fetch her other companion away.

He followed Clare and called to her to stop. As she did so he went to her, and forcing a smile said, "My dearest Clare, it is hard that I should have such a duty to perform—I

must send you from us—your father is not very well and has sent for you.”

The unusual tenderness of his address startled her in the beginning, and the smile did not allay her fears. “Oh! Colonel Ashton, have you told me all?” she cried, clasping her hands in alarm.

“Your father is not very well,” he said now with gravity, “but here is a letter from Mr. Grantley, which will tell you all you wish to know.”

She took it with trembling hands. It was this—

“My dear child,—I did not think that I should have to fulfil my promise. Your dear father has been well and happy until to-day. At about eight o'clock this evening he became suddenly very unwell, and I thought it best to send for Dr. Pratt. He is now better, but I am sure that it will be a

comfort to him and to you to have you back again. Do not be over anxious my dear child, but put your trust in God, who orders all things wisely and well.

“Your faithful friend,

“EVERARD GRANTLEY.

“Middlethorpe, 12 o'clock.”

It was the conclusion which sent a pang of deadly fear to her heart. She put the note into Colonel Ashton's hands and asked for his opinion. He encouraged her as much as was possible, and told her that the man who brought the note, though he knew very little, said they were all going quietly to bed when he left Middlethorpe. He then added that Mrs. Hollis was already preparing for their departure, and that the carriage would be at the door in a very few minutes. “And now, dear Clare,” he said, “there is one thing to be done. To tell Ellen this news.

We must do it without startling her if we can. If you can do it it will be best, but do not undertake it if I am asking too much. It is only for her sake."

Clare saw the necessity at once. She went to the window and stood there for a moment strengthening and collecting herself, then went back without further preparation to Ellen's room.

She sate down on her sister's bed, and said with perfect quietness, "You must wonder to see me back so soon, but I came to tell you something. You thought Colonel Ashton looked grave, it was because he had got to send me away, and he was afraid of startling us. Papa is not very well, and Mr. Grantley has sent for me, as he promised he would. Colonel Ashton and I both think we had better go at once, for of course no one knows papa's ways as we do."

Her manner was so perfectly natural, and self-possessed, that Ellen was assured by it. With bitter regret, and, owing to her present weakness, with many tears, she saw her sister go, but nothing like alarm was excited. That Clare should go if her father was not well, seemed to her a simple necessity; *that* caused no terror.

While Clare was getting ready, Colonel Ashton went again to the messenger. He had purposely avoided asking many particulars, until his task was done. The man said Mr. Grantley had desired him to say that Sir Hugh was better, and nothing more. When pressed, however, by Colonel Ashton, he said he believed the attack had been a fit of apoplexy, and though Sir Hugh was better he did not think he had come to his senses. He added, that while he was waiting for the note in the servants' hall,

the housemaid had come from Sir Hugh's room crying, and had told the servants, Dr. Pratt might say what he pleased, but she knew her master would never leave his bed again. When Mr. Grantley came down with the note, he had, however, repeated that Sir Hugh was better, and had desired all the servants to go to bed. To him he had given special orders to say nothing to Miss Willoughby.

Colonel Ashton re-enforced this command, but the man's account made him sick at heart.

He was happy to find that Mrs. Hollis took a sanguine view, and by her confidence had much encouraged Clare. He endeavoured to follow her example, but the strong and tender grasp of her hand as he placed her in the carriage, undid what his words essayed to do.

It was nearly three o'clock before they left Uskford; the journey was long, and the state of the hilly roads made it more tedious. The day and night that passed were such as leave indelible traces on the mind and being. Life, in its dread uncertainty, thus brought near, can never be breathed again with careless breath. Uncertainty becomes the spectre that follows hope and joy, and disunites what the heart so vainly seeks to unite: earth and perfect happiness. Yet, while such times of exceeding bitter trial endure, strength comes to meet them sufficient for the day, and even in memory, though something of their bitterness ever remains, the remembrance of the benefits received compels the acknowledgment—"Even thus it was good to be afflicted."

The journey was performed with all possible expedition, and it was not two

o'clock when the travellers arrived at Middlethorpe. Mr. Grantley had long been listening for the sound of the wheels, and stood at the door as the carriage drew up. If he had smiled a welcome, Clare's long repressed and over-wrought feelings must have given way in some burst of hysterical passion; but he stood there in the moonlight so sad and grave, that quietly and in silence she suffered him to lift her from the carriage. Then she laid her hand, without speaking, on his arm.

"Your dear father is much the same," he said, in tones that sent every expiring spark of hope to utter death. "My dearest child, you must prepare yourself to see him changed. Nothing is impossible with God, and even yet it may please him to raise him up, and give him a longer continuance among us; but as far as we can calculate,

his time on earth will be but short. You must pray for great strength, my dear child, for you will need it."

As he went up the stairs with her, he told her that several times during the night he had feared she would not be in time, and it was better she should know that at any moment the last summons might come. "Yet," he added as they reached the door, "it may be that our prayers will even yet be heard."

Sir Hugh was still insensible ; a second attack of apoplexy that morning had made the case hopeless. A third, which the physician expected every moment, would probably, he said, put an end to his existence at once. But it was not so that Sir Hugh was to die, nor was his child to be left an orphan without a last farewell.

Clare knelt by his bed during the remain-

ing hours of the night; calm and tearless, listening to the painful breathing. It might have been years that she had knelt there, so entirely did that one sick room and dying bed become her whole existence; no impression of a past or idea of a future forcing an intrusion there. Towards morning the breathing changed its character, it became faint and low, but lost its heavy sound. Mr. Grantley, who sate on the opposite side of the bed, near the window, rose and looked at Sir Hugh's countenance, then opened the shutters and let the daylight in.

Sir Hugh stirred and opened his eyes. The physician approached and felt his pulse, then in answer to Clare's agonizing look of supplication sadly shook his head. He stooped down to her and whispered, "I think he will come to his senses, if there is

anything to be said or done, be prepared. His time is short."

He then fetched a cordial and forced a little between Sir Hugh's lips. A few minutes more they waited in silent watchfulness—then suddenly the dying man turned his eyes to the light, and said in his own natural voice, hardly enfeebled by illness, "Whata bright sunrise for my last morning."

Mr. Grantley rose and came forward stooping over the bed. "Come round to me, doctor," he said, "there is no time to be lost,—my hour is come,—God be merciful to me a sinner."

With dull eyes he mechanically followed Mr. Grantley as he moved round, and came to the head of the bed, on the side where Clare was kneeling. There they rested, and then, for the first time, he saw his daughter.

“My darling, are you here?” he then said.
“Thank God for this and all his mercies.”

She rose and kissed him quietly. “Yes, papa, I came last night,” she said.

“And how’s Ellen?” he went on, his recollection evidently clear and distinct, “and how’s the little thing I never shall see?”

She kissed him again. She could speak no more.

He caught hold of her hand and told her to leave him for a few minutes with Mr. Grantley, but as she prepared to obey, he changed his intention. “No, stay, my darling,” he said, “I have something to say that must be said before I die in peace. Doctor, are you there? do you hear me?”

He came close to him again, and Clare knelt down again to hear him. She knew what was coming; and even in that awful hour a sense of thankfulness arose, not from

dreams of happiness, but for his sake and Edward's, that one might live and the other die, in peace and charity.

“ It's about Edward, Doctor, that I have to speak ;—here on this last bed of death things look differently to what they do in life, and I confess, with sorrow of heart, that hatred and all uncharitableness has had place within me. Thank God He has blown it away with the breath of His good Spirit, and I can pray for Edward's welfare as for my friend and my son. For the rest, let time declare it. I do not think he has yet shown himself worthy of this precious child ; but he may do it now. I leave her in your hands, Doctor—be her guardian and her guide, and when it seems to you fitting let them be made one. Clare, my darling, follow your own good heart ; ponder wisely, and when he seems to you such a one as your father and your blessed

mother would approve, then be his wife ; and my blessing," and with an effort he laid both his hands on her bowed and drooping head, "be on you, and on your home, and on your husband, and on your children for ever and ever.—Amen."

He paused a minute ; then called " Mrs. Hollis, my dear old friend, come to me and tell me you have heard what I said ! Take care of my child, and God bless you !"

The poor old woman wept too much to remain. The physician led her out, and at her father's renewed desire Clare followed her.

When they returned it was for the last rites and the last prayers of the Christian man. All was ended, in calm and peace, no cloud upon the spirit disturbing Sir Hugh's repose.

He still lingered on, occasionally dozing, occasionally saying a few words—all like himself—full of thought and care for all who had

ever come near to him. Once, after a long rest, he suddenly said, "Doctor, you must put me into your sermon next week. Tell my people to think of me and take warning. 'In the morning it is green, and groweth up; in the evening, cut down, dried up, and withered.' It may do them good, poor souls—and tell them to make haste—tell them 'there's no repentance in the grave,' and 'the night comes suddenly when no man can work.'"

"I will not fail," Mr. Grantley said, stooping over him and grasping his dying hand.

After this he spoke but little collectedly, and towards one o'clock he suddenly closed his eyes and died in peace.

CHAPTER X.

"The tears and sorrows of many years may perhaps not repair the loss which one hour or act may bring "

BAXTER.

WHEN Edward drove from the door at Abergeale, he again unfolded Mr. Grantley's letter. It was short, but it gave a few particulars of Sir Hugh's illness, and mentioning the day of the funeral, begged him, if possible, to be present at it. It ended thus, "Miss Willoughby, I need hardly tell you, is in much distress. This is no common tie that is broken ; she has, I trust, great comfort

in the thought of her father's happy state of mind ; she has also, as she well knows, the heart-felt sympathy of hundreds. The servants and the poor are mourning with bitter regret, the loss of a father and a true friend, for such was Sir Hugh to them. My dear young friend, will you pardon me, if, at this moment, I endeavour to impress upon you the responsibilities of your position. From this time let it be your care to put away childish things, and to strive to walk before those committed to your charge with a sober, wise, and godly life. So shall the love and blessing of hundreds rest upon you, as they did on him who is gone to his eternal rest.

“Yours faithfully.

“ E. GRANTLEY.”

Edward closed the letter with an expression of intense misery on his countenance ;

then throwing himself into a corner of the carriage, remained almost immovable during the rest of the long day.

It was ten o' clock when he arrived at Middlethorpe. A servant, whose eyes were red with weeping, was at the door awaiting him. He led Edward to the drawing-room, and after saying that Miss Willoughby was gone to bed and Mr Grantley gone home, left him alone. Edward stood in the middle of the room, like one in a trance. There was no change. Everything was as he remembered it. There stood Sir Hugh's chair, and the table with the newspaper beside it,—there Mrs Hollis's little table, and the chair in which Colonel Ashton had been accustomed to sit, and brood on melancholy thoughts. His thoughts flew back, to the happy, peaceful days of his first acquaintance with Clare, when such a calm and peace had

stolen over his heart, as seemed to foretell of a life of happiness. Suddenly the vision changed, and before him arose the scene of the last evening; every chair filled with some forgotten, and at the time unmarked, form: he saw Mr. Molesey's sidelong glances; saw flaming with passion the face now lying in that house, cold and pale; felt upon his arm the touch of Clare's hand, heard her voice, and looked into her imploring eyes;—with this the vision swept away, he came to himself and found himself alone. He knit his brows and folded his arms over the unutterable anguish of his heart, and was walking with rapid steps from the room, as if thus to escape from his misery, when the door opened and Sir Hugh's own servant came in.

He approached Edward with a look of doubtful gravity, as if uncertain how he would be received; but at the first sight of

his ashy pale face, tears came into his eyes, and he said, "I see, sir, you feel for the loss we have had."

Edward held out his hand, and shook the man's hand without speaking; then collecting himself, inquired after Clare.

"She had a bad headache, sir, and went to bed; but she desired me to wait for you, and to tell you that dinner is ready whenever you please to order it."

Edward shook his head with disgust. "I am going to my room directly," he said, "I cannot stay here. I will have some tea there. Does Miss Willoughby go to the funeral to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is Colonel Ashton here?"

"No, sir. Mrs Ashton was too ill for him to leave her; she was better by the accounts this morning."

“Who goes with Miss Willoughby?”

“Mrs Hollis, sir, if she is well enough, and there will be several gentlemen. We are to walk through the shrubbery, sir, as we did on the day of poor Miss Ellen’s wedding—it was his own wish, and the workmen are to bear him to his grave. My master never liked the pomps of the world.”

Edward said no more, but asked to be shown to his room. It was ready, and looked pleasant with a bright fire, and many minute attentions to his comfort; he felt Clare had been there, felt it, and was miserable. When left to himself he sate down to the writing-table, and pulling out a sheet of paper placed it before him, then covered his face with his hands.

At last he wrote. “I am now your nearest relation, let me be by you to-morrow to support you in your sorrowful duty, and to

share in your grief for him you have lost. If you do not forbid me, I shall be by your side.

“E. W.”

When tea was brought to his room he gave this note, with a request that Miss Willoughby might have it the first thing in the morning; and after a few further inquiries, dismissing all attendance, remained alone with his thoughts.

No word forbidding his request was sent. In the morning, therefore, he was ready to take his place by Clare's side. As she came down the stairs, he held out his arm and silently guided her along as she followed the sad procession; all thoughts of self, all the tumults of passion and regret, even all feelings of humiliation, stilled by the solemnity of the scene. To and fro he was by her side, and then as silently they parted again.

During the morning of the day he wan-

dered about lonely and wretched. When his own servant suddenly called him "Sir Edward," he turned pale, and gave so stern a look, that the man hurried wondering away. To undo one week of the past—to have the right to speak the overflowing tenderness that was bursting within him,—or to be mad at once and end his misery. These were the vain and bitter thoughts that made his whole occupation. He could face nothing; could form no resolution; his thoughts were fruitless and unprofitable; vainly groaning over the past; bringing forth no resolve for the future.

Towards the middle of the day, he ordered a chaise to be ready at three o'clock; then suddenly taking courage, he wrote to Clare, telling her of his departure, and begging to be allowed to bid her farewell. He then awaited her, irresolute as before; the

interview was left to chance. He could frame no words in his solitude, knew not how he should greet, or with what language address her.

The servant by which the message had been sent, brought word that Miss Willoughby would come down directly, and Edward stood, as a year before he had done. This time the awaiting was agony; a dread which had no name, made the pulses of his heart stand still within him.

She came in. The dread, the agony was not lessened; sorrow had touched her so gently, her fair youthful face was so touching in its sadness, she looked so much in need of love and comfort, and tenderness, that Edward's very soul melted with compassion. But how was he to speak; was there not guilt in the very pity that moved him? He could not tell; his beating heart

asked the question, but his bewildered thoughts gave him no answer. As she advanced, however, calmness returned to him. There was something in her manner that said, plainer than tongue could speak, that words of earthly hope, of this world's passion, were to have no place that day. Edward could not mistake it, and with a cowardly feeling of relief he prepared to obey.

She was very quiet and still, though her eyes looked as if they had wept much; and after shaking hands with him, she sate down and said, "I did not know you were going, Edward, or I should have sent to you myself;" with a tremulous voice adding, "your note was very kind; I was anxious to tell you how much I felt it."

"I thought you would wish to be alone, Clare—I did not venture to stay," he answered, as quietly as he was able.

She did not immediately reply, and in her cast down eyes he saw a tear trembling. She was perhaps questioning herself—perhaps her desolate orphaned heart felt the protection of affection in his presence. Edward gazed at her; then averted his eyes in anguish of spirit.

“Yes, you are right,” she said at last; “I think we had rather be alone; but will you come back again before we go?”

“Go!”

She did not speak, but made a sign of assent.

“Oh! Clare,” he cried, starting up, “you are not going so to grieve me; is it possible; must I, need I say,—

“No, Edward, indeed,” she said, interrupting him, “you need say nothing; I know well, that whatever is kindest you would wish; but we must go soon to poor

Ellen—she has been very ill—and besides—” she paused, and crushed her hands together, then merely added, “it is better.”

After a moment she went on, calmly, but with evident effort. “I suppose you have heard that I have been left executrix; there are some papers and letters to look over; some are wishes and directions about this property; I should like to look over them with you; can you come again before we go!”

“Oh, Clare! whatever you wish,” he said, sadly.

The kind voice almost overcame her, but she struggled on, and after a few explanations, said, “It may be a fortnight, or perhaps three weeks, before I am ready. I have not yet been able to attend as I should. I will write; where shall I find you?”

“In London,” he replied, hastily. The

resolution was formed at the moment, but even in its formation brought relief. With more earnestness than seemed necessary, he added, "I shall be there for some weeks; I will not stir till you send for me."

"I don't wish that," Clare said with a faint smile; "a day or two either way will not matter."

"I shall be there," he repeated, and then there was a pause.

"You came from Abergeale, did you not?" Clare inquired, after a short silence.

"Yes," Edward said, and his colour deepened; "I was there."

"Did you like it—I hope you were happy there?"

"Yes," he replied again, the blood rising to his temples, "they were very kind to me."

Again there was a pause; then Edward

forced himself to speak. "Ralph felt for you, Clare," he said, in tones that he meant to be only kind, but which had a tremulous earnestness in their kindness. "You are not left alone in your grief—many hearts and many prayers are with you."

She endeavoured to answer and to thank him; twice turning away her head to overcome her agitation, but both times in vain; then suddenly rising, she held out her hand.

He made no effort to retain her, but took it with a quiet "God bless you;" and she vanished and left him alone.

It was over for this time. Alas, alas! he thought, that with a sigh of relief he should see her depart; that she, whom now he too painfully knew to be heart of his very heart, should have power only to cause him agony.

A few minutes before Edward left Middlethorpe, Mr. Grantley arrived. He heard

of the departure with surprise; but though with surprise, with admiration and commendation. It was a conduct which, in his view, spoke of unselfishness and of that watchful consideration for others, in which so much of the real improvement of the character must have its source, and in which Edward had hitherto shown himself so deficient. He eagerly caught at the promise for Clare's future happiness afforded by the action.

* * * *

It was nearly three weeks before Clare summoned Edward back to Middlethorpe. She went through her sad task steadily, but the grief that had so suddenly clouded her life, had brought a kind of amazement and bewilderment with it, and though a brave nature and strong sense of duty struggled on, the conflict was often severe.

The three weeks were passed by Edward

in London, and were weeks as fruitless in profitable thoughts or definite resolves, as the hours at Middlethorpe had been. Some business occupied him, fortunately for his intellect, for there is a kind of brooding over irretrievable ill, which is not far from madness. Thankfully he put away the burden of thought to an uncertain to-morrow.

He arrived at Middlethorpe in time for dinner. He then found to his dismay, that Clare's departure was fixed for the following morning. He had pictured quiet days passed together; he had dreamed of his cares gently drawn from him — of counsel, of pardon, of hope in the future, of the snare broken, and the captive to a wild word delivered. Now—they were to meet and part. And could it be here, in the moment of leaving the home of her youth, that he must tell her it was for ever? As he paced his

own room, before he met her, he tossed his arms in the wildness of frantic despair.

He sate with her at dinner. He, Mrs. Hollis, and Clare. Mrs. Hollis was a changed woman. The blow that had fallen had deprived her of strength, self-command, and all the hardness and roughness of her nature. She had never looked to survive Sir Hugh; and, as with Clare, the sudden grief had brought amazement with it. She felt also, and deeply, the departure from Middlethorpe. Ten years before this time, she had chosen her last resting place in the churchyard, and had planted a tree upon it; and as surely as Sunday evening came, it had been her habit to stand before it with those words on her lips, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, Oh, Lord!" Sadder than with many living hopes, was her parting with this thought of death. She

sate at dinner with downcast eyes and tears coursing down her cheeks; spoke no word, gave no assistance to the sad, and silent meeting. Edward endured—but surely he felt, “No martyr’s torments were ever such as those I feel.”

Clare exerted herself to the uttermost. She seemed to feel for him, and endeavoured to cheer him as much as she was able; but it was a hard and painful task; for of what could they speak, who were so much, and yet nothing to each other.

As soon as the quick repast was over, she approached him, and said in a low voice,—“I must ask you to come to my father’s room, I have put everything ready there. I did not like to make any disturbance.”

Edward made a sign of acquiescence, and she lighted a candle and led the way. As she went she said, “Poor Mrs. Hollis begged

not to come, and I would not press it. She has never been there since. Old people feel, perhaps, such things more than the young do." Her lips quivered as she spoke.

Was this an apology for being alone with him? Was it a warning against the expression of any selfish feeling? So he interpreted her words; and again the coward heart was relieved.

It appeared that for many years, notwithstanding his feeling against his heir, Sir Hugh had been in the habit of noting down rules for his guidance, suggestions for future improvement, circumstances to be considered and guarded against. These notes had reference to the characters of the tenantry, in general; and often entered minutely into individual circumstances. Nothing could be more useful to a young, unpractised man

like Edward; and Sir Hugh's strong sense and shrewd powers of observation, gave a peculiar value to his remarks.

Clare went over these notes, gravely and quietly, here and there interposing a wish or request of her own—now petitioning for indulgence, now pointing out the necessity of warning. It occupied about an hour's time. They sate together before a large bureau full of small drawers; and when the first task was done, Clare showed, in the same grave and tranquil manner, the arrangements she had made of various family papers. And quietly Edward followed her. He uttered the necessary words of acquiescence in her requests, and spoke with feeling and kindness of his desire to carry into effect all the wishes of Sir Hugh. But from the subjects before them he never wandered—no word pointing, however vaguely, to a future,

escaped him; no softer tone spoke of a nearness between them greater than their present relationship conferred.

When all was done, Clare sate still, and there was a pause. Edward broke it. "Is this all?" he said, sadly.

"Yes—all!" she replied quietly; but when the quiet answer was given, her mind, with sudden perception, awoke to what that *all* meant. She had separated herself from her father's concerns and yielded them up to another. She had fulfilled his last wishes, and her last cares for him were over. The tie that yet bound her to Middlethorpe was broken, and she was free to depart. In sudden vividness these things were felt. Yes, *all* was over; and losing the power with which she had hitherto restrained and controlled her feelings, Clare laid her head on her hands, and wept bitterly.

Edward rose hastily from his seat by her side. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," was the bitter cry of his spirit, as with folded arms and set teeth he battled with the temptations that assailed him. Had he no right to comfort that desolation? none to whisper that a love even nearer and dearer than a father's would fill up the void and restore what was lost? *None.* That time was past. Undoubtedly there were kind words that might have been spoken; there was a tenderness which might have soothed and yet been without guilt to another; but in his struggling and tempest-tossed mind, the bounds and limits of duty were not seen.

Yet he could not be silent. He drew near to her and said, "Clare, be comforted;" but the inward strife brought restraint to his manner, and his tone was hoarse and cold.

It grated on his own ears, and he loathed himself for his heartlessness.

There was something in the tone, Clare knew not what, that froze up her spirit and hushed her grief. The miserable can pour their tale of anguish into the happy ear, and find sweet solace from their compassion; but there is a cold expression which chills the fountain of grief. Suddenly she felt ashamed and humbled, as if in his presence such sorrow should not have been shown.

"I beg your pardon, Edward," she said gently, as she rose and began to close the drawers and prepare for her departure; "I know I should not have pained you with this, I can't tell what came over me."

"Do not grieve me by such words," he said, in the same low, restrained tone. He dared not trust himself to another word. He could only feel in thankfulness that this

time of agony was over. A few moments afterwards Clare left him to himself, and again in frantic grief he paced up and down the room. "There needs no other gibbet than that which the troubled spirit hath erected in his own heart."

When he returned to the drawing-room he found Clare already there. She was perfectly composed, and began almost immediately to speak of their approaching journey, and, from a simple desire to speak, to question him regarding the road. But he was too miserable to exert himself, even for her sake, and after some unavailing efforts, a total silence ensued. It was broken by Mr. Grantley's entrance. He came up weary and sad at heart, for in the break up of Middlethorpe the best joys of his life were taken away; but he soon perceived the painful restraint which hung over

the small, sad party, and he endeavoured with kindness to dispel it. Edward's state of mind scarcely perplexed him, he saw it was restrained even to coldness, but he understood this well, and though in his own kindness of heart he wished he had permitted more of his love to be seen, he admired the self-control which could so sacrifice its deepest feelings to a sense of duty.

When, at an early hour, Clare and Mrs. Hollis prepared to leave the drawing-room, Clare, as she held out her hand to Mr. Grantley, begged him to be with them in the morning. It was a sudden desire on her part, an almost unconscious expression of a feeling of uneasiness in Edward's presence.

"I had intended to ask it," was Mr. Grantley's answer, "but feared you would forbid me."

And at half-past eight, the hour appointed for their departure, he was there. It was a trying time—but why attempt to describe what all can well imagine. When all was ready Clare came down. The hall was thronged with servants, the villagers had congregated round the carriage. She had feared it would be so, and had desired to be spared the trial; and yet, even for her own sake, why should she have sought to forbid the expression of a love whose after memory could have nothing of bitterness in it. Edward stood fixed as a stone, as she went down the line of servants, shaking hands with each. When she turned to him, his voice refused to murmur even “God bless you;” his hand feared almost to touch her, lest his strong grasp of affection should, in that moment, speak what must no more be said. It was Mr. Grantley who placed her

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in the carriage, and whose last kind words and tearful glance comforted her as she drove away.

When the wheels disappeared among the trees, Mr. Grantley, who had perceived the paleness of Edward's cheek, turned to speak some words of kindness to him—but Edward was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

“The top of hope supposed, the root of ruth will be.”

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

EDWARD remained at Middlethorpe, and entered at once upon the duties Sir Hugh had left him to do. The minute care the latter had bestowed upon the affairs of his tenantry, encouraging them to believe that whatever was interesting to them was interesting to him, had made the office of Lord of Middlethorpe no sinecure. The shrewd sense which distinguished Sir Hugh had

added to his many avocations. Common sense is always valuable, and its value cannot be hid. Like money, it is a trust held for the benefit of others. Rich and poor in the neighbourhood of Middlethorpe had with one consent appointed Sir Hugh arbiter and adviser in matters great and small; and, unless when prejudice strongly interfered, his decisions had been as just and wise as they were decisive. He loved to give, and all were willing to receive from him.

No such value, in these early days at least, could be attached to Edward's opinion; and yet, so accustomed were the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to look to Middlethorpe for guidance and counsel, that he shortly found himself involved in business, so various in kind, and often so perplexing in its bearings, as required the rousing of all his powers to understand. He gave himself with a good

heart to his work. In this, acting partly from a sense of duty, partly from the hope of finding in occupation some dissipation of his wretchedness, and partly it was to him a sad and sorrowful pleasure thus to fulfil the wishes of the father of Clare.

The country rang with tales of the kindness and affability of the new comer, and the tears Sir Hugh's memory excited were followed by words of blessing on his heir.

Mr. Grantley heard and saw with pleasure, and with a thankful heart he began to look forward to a new and not far distant dawn of happiness at Middlethorpe.

He watched Edward unceasingly, and the more he watched the more he was perplexed regarding his present duty. His original intention had been to suppress the news he had to give for some months. He had supposed that under suspense and uncertainty

the true nature of the man would more perfectly appear, and the doubts Sir Hugh had expressed regarding his character be more perfectly set at rest. But Edward's good conduct pleaded for a shorter probation, and the distraction of his mind, in Mr. Grantley's kind heart, pleaded more forcibly still.

It was evident to all that Edward was not happy. He lived a lonely life. Except on business he admitted no society. Early and late he might be seen walking alone, with pale cheeks and knit brows. If spoken to or consulted, his brow cleared and he became animated, but left to himself, the same anxious, perturbed expression returned and clouded his countenance again. He rarely smiled, and the gay spirit which in former days had seemed to be ever flowing beneath his other moods, had so entirely

vanished that it was hard to imagine it had ever been there.

Mr. Grantley's mind was not naturally a strong one, and it was a very conscientious one. Conscientiousness adds to the doubts and fears that indecision brings. For a month he was literally torn with conflicting passions. He dreaded lest his pity for Edward should entail a failure in duty to Sir Hugh or to Clare. When at length his decision was made, it was made in a moment, and was founded on no other arguments than those which from the beginning had been luring him on. It was on a Sunday that the moment of decision arrived. It happened that during the morning service a gleam of sunshine suddenly appearing and disappearing again, fell, for the single instant of its duration, full on Edward's face. His countenance, thus exhibited in the bright light,

struck painfully on Mr. Grantley's mind ; he saw the deepening lines on his brow, the restless, sleepless look of his blue eyes, and something in every feature so careworn and expressive of a disturbed spirit, that his impulsive decision was to doubt no more. It would have been no desire and no practice of Sir Hugh's to torture a fellow-creature with needless pain.

Under the influence of this feeling, Mr. Grantley walked up to Middlethorpe. It was after the evening service, and the evening was cold. A piercing easterly March wind blew in his face, as he walked along. His teeth chattered, and buttoning his great coat more closely about him, he quickened his steps, consoling his human feelings with the anticipation of a comfortable conversation over the well-known roaring fire of the drawing-room. To his surprise and dismay he



found Edward in the garden, on the farther terrace, pacing up and down, exposed to the full bitterness of the blast as it swept along the open meadows.

Mr. Grantley joined him, but notwithstanding the interest of his errand, human infirmity prevailed, and with a strong expression of discomfort at the cold, he asked if it would be disagreeable to Edward to go in.

"Is it cold?" Edward said, indifferently; "I did not feel it." But he consented at once, and they walked towards the house.

"It is the very bitterest March wind I ever remember to have felt," Mr. Grantley replied, shivering, "and we have all the benefit of the blast up here." He paused a moment, then glancing at Edward, added, "I cannot help imagining, Sir Edward, that you have that within you which makes you indifferent to outward things."

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“ ‘The tempest in the mind
Doth from the senses take all feeling else—
Save what beats there.’ ”

“How do you mean?” Edward enquired, startled at this over-true remark.

“From many signs, my dear young friend, if you will allow me to call you so, I fear you have a mind ill at ease. Would that it were in my power to relieve it.”

“It is in no man’s power,” Edward said, in a low hoarse voice.

“I would not say that,” Mr. Grantley replied, kindly; “you remember the old saying, ‘When need is highest, help is nighest.’ ”

Edward made no answer.

They now reached the house, and entered the drawing-room; and Mr. Grantley’s heart might have been cheered by the blazing fire of wood and coal, which made the

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room as bright as day ; but he had forgotten his cold, and without noticing the comfort about him, sate down in silence.

In equal silence Edward stood by the fire. From the moment of Mr. Grantley's first remark he had felt that the time was come. The time of confession and of decision ; and the tumult that for weeks had been beating and warring within him was lulled at the thought. His heart *died*—there is such a feeling—then hardened and turned to stone.

The silence was long, for Edward's manner gave no invitation to interference ; and however kind his purpose, and however undoubting as to the acceptableness of the news he brought, Mr. Grantley felt something of the natural discomfort which all must feel, in touching uninvited on the private affairs of other men.

At last he began. "From the best of my

observation, Sir Edward, I gathered that you allowed Miss Willoughby to leave this house without any allusion to the feelings you entertained for her."

"I had no right to speak," was the same low hoarse answer.

"True, undoubtedly ; but human feelings are strong and the temptation must have been great. I do not know how I should myself, in my own youth, at least, have borne the trial. My dear young friend, you must allow me to express to you the admiration your conduct excited in my mind. Self-control is no easy virtue to the best of us. I know you well enough to believe it was unusually hard to you."

"Mr. Grantley," Edward said, almost sternly, "you do not know what you are saying."

"I will say no more then on that point,"

he replied, smiling; "but to one who reproves so often, you should not grudge a few words of praise. But, my dear Sir Edward, I have a communication to make to you, which, I believe, you scarcely expect, and which, I hope, will relieve the anxiety and doubt in which late events must necessarily have left your mind."

Edward said nothing, but turned on him a look so full of wretchedness, that Mr. Grantley made the more haste to speak; and though naturally a little disposed to be prosy in his communications, he cut short, on this occasion, his notes and comments, and went straight to the point; in a few touching words, describing the scene in Sir Hugh's dying room, and, as well as he was able, repeating his words.

Edward heard him in total silence. The news sank into his heart's depths as lead

sinks into the sea. A dead, cold, heavy weight—causing no disturbance—but piercing through—there to remain for ever. Mr. Grantley was surprised; he had expected to give immediate relief—to produce something like rapture; but he knew enough of Edward to know that he was not a common character, nor usually affected as common characters are. After considering a moment, therefore, he gathered that his silence proceeded from the deep sense of his unworthiness; and he determined to add now some of those notes and comments his anxiety had previously cut short.

“I have been considerably perplexed,” he began again, “for some time past, regarding my duty in this matter. Miss Willoughby’s happiness is far dearer to me than my own, and I dreaded lest any haste on my part,

any desire to relieve my own mind, might produce future unhappiness to her ; but, my dear Sir Edward, your conduct decided me. It is true a month is but a short trial, but the restraint you have put on yourself and the self-command you have shown regarding Miss Willoughby, raised my hopes of your future well-doing so high, that I felt I might fearlessly and consistently with my duty break to you the news I now have spoken. You will understand that I say nothing of the fulfilment of your wishes. All I can hold out to you is *hope*; shew yourself worthy of her whom you love, and no other earthly impediment stands between you. My dear young friend," and here Mr. Grantley rose in some emotion and held out his hand ; "I find it hard to speak my joy and congratulations—may God shortly make you worthy, and may the blessing of him who has been taken from

us rest on this home and make it happy again."

The hand that was held out, Edward did not take—with rapid steps he walked to the window twice, restlessly to and fro; then suddenly he stood still and said calmly, "Mr. Grantley, you see before you the most miserable man alive, the most miserable, the most guilty."

Mr. Grantley turned pale; in the bright firelight, Edward saw the paleness of his cheek, but he said no more to relieve him, he stood in silence as before.

"Do I understand you aright, Sir Edward," Mr. Grantley asked, at length, in a bewildered tone, "have you done such things that you feel a barrier built up between her and you for ever. God grant I may be mistaken in my apprehensions."

"I have done such a thing that we are

parted for ever," Edward said in sad solemnity; "I have chosen to myself another wife, and she whom I worship, whom I idolize, will gladden our eyes in this house—*never.*"

. Mr. Grantley sate down speechless, *he* knew what Clare's love for Edward had been, it was the deathblow to every earthly hope for his darling.

Edward remained in the same calm immoveable state. With something of a strange curiosity he contemplated the grief of his companion as if it was a thing in which he had no part. The despair in his own heart was dead and cold. He could not speak a kind word to comfort the old man's fallen hopes, could not express a regret; what he did feel was beyond words, he made no attempt to convey it.

Mr. Grantley rose at length from his seat, and said with something of coldness, "I must

beg your pardon, Sir Edward, for my interference in this matter; I was not aware—I had no anticipations—I beg your pardon—another day we will speak on the subject again.”

With an effort he held out his hand. His eyes were with his heart, and they were far away with Clare in her sorrows, and resentment for a moment against him who thus had dealt with her, superseded all more charitable feelings. Had he looked in Edward’s face he would have read a tale that would have banished anger.

Edward shook his head in silence, and opened the door to let him out, then only he said, “Mr. Grantley, pray for the most miserable man alive.”

Mr. Grantley turned again and held out his hand, melted by these words; then went out into the piercing cold, and wept till he was ashamed.



Early the following morning, regretting his anger against one who evidently suffered more than any, he went up to Middlethorpe, but found Edward gone.

The account of the servant was, that he had left the house early in the morning, having sent for post-horses the night before. On enquiry whither he was gone, the man replied, "Sir Edward did not say, but he supposed to London."

CHAPTER XII.

“ Oh! Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to Thy will,
And make Thy pleasure mine.”

COWPER.

A FEW days after her father's death, Clare wrote thus to Colonel Ashton :—“ You remember the house for which you begged me to find a tenant. We did not think how quickly it would be found. If you and Ellen see no objection, let that be our future home. I should be glad if we could go there soon.

I am sure it will be good for Mrs. Hollis, I think it will for me, to begin our new life at once."

Colonel Ashton's wish had been that Uskford should be Clare's home ; but he was too truly kind to press his own, or even Ellen's wishes, against hers ; and with little difficulty therefore he consented to her request. After passing a few days at Uskford, thither Clare and Mrs. Hollis removed. — All that kindness could do to add to its comfort had been done ; and when Clare entered upon her new home, she felt that in its freshness—the pleasantness and beauty of its situation, and its near neighbourhood to her sister—she had no cause to complain, and much cause for gratitude.

Nevertheless, the change was great. Behind her were the cloudless days of her happy youth—the cheerful home, whose loved and

familiar features were bound up with every memory of the past—the cheerful society of her father, whose every word and act had a something in it, vigorous, cheering, elastic, which made life a perpetual spring. Around her were new features, new cares, the dreary days of a cold, dull February—the depressing society of Mrs. Hollis, who rarely ceased to weep, and who, though never murmuring, ever mourned,—and the constant presence of her own aching longings for what never on earth could be seen or heard again.

It is true no cares of poverty, none of the struggles of life, assailed her; yet there is something in the void and vacancy of a sorrowing life which requires no exertion, for a time at least, trying to the mind to bear.

Of the future as yet she thought but little. Her father's solemn words were ringing in her ear; and again and again she

had resolved that no pity for Edward, no pity for herself, should tempt her to forget them. She would wait and watch, and not till she felt her father blessing her decision, would she consent to be his wife—his wife, should he still wish her to be so. On this point she thought nothing, argued nothing; but there was a strange, undefinable feeling on her mind, which made her avert her eyes from the far future with something of dread.

It was in the present, therefore, that her duty lay—to the present, therefore, that her energies were to be turned. It was to bear the sorrow of her present daily life that her prayers arose. Strong affections make strong afflictions, and her affections tenaciously clinging to what was gone, made her daily life a struggle indeed. But “still upward” was the path she trod. Early, very early in life that upward path had been begun—her

mother's grave, made on the threshold of her existence, had cast a soft shadow, a shade from heaven over earth's bewildered pleasures—the thought of her mother's spirit, shining like a star in the world to which all are hastening, had lured her eyes to gaze in that direction; and when the lights of earth looked dim, she saw that light more clearly, and set herself more stedfastly to follow it.

The bleak cold of the Sunday spoken of in the last chapter, was followed, as is not uncommon in England's varying clime, by a day of almost summer-like softness. The wind changed to the south, a few soft showers fell, and spring seemed about to revive the earth. They are dry and unsensitive moralists who refuse to admit the influence of genial breezes even on the heart of sorrow. There is, indeed, a glaring sunshine and an agony of grief, which seem to turn with revulsion

of feeling, the one from the other ; but there is a softer sorrow which receives with thankfulness one of God's good gifts, the beauty of his world, and the insensible pleasure of breathing the balmy breath of life.

Clare walked this day in the sunshine; saw the opening buds, and listened to the birdssinging; and the feeling, the quickest lost in excessive sorrow, of the *possibility* of reviving to happiness again, came like a breath of music to her heart. It comes in such cases like a new sense—we turn from it half with dread, and yet we welcome it—for though born to trouble, man is born to consolation also; and there is neither wisdom nor love in the unthankfulness that would refuse even a cup of cold water in comfort.

She was lingering in the garden of her new abode at the close of the day, unwilling to lose the sense of peace and quietness that

had stolen over her. The sun was setting over some distant blue hills, not brilliantly, but with a soft, subdued light; not far beneath her, under a bank that sloped from where she stood, a quiet stream rippled along, and here and there, on its silvery waters, and on the green banks above it, a few rays of parting sunshine were brightly lingering. She leant upon a kind of terrace-wall, which enclosed the garden, and watched the stream, and suffered her thoughts to wander away, but their wandering was shortly interrupted. Along the banks of the stream a figure appeared, and, turning up the sloping ground, he approached her where she stood.

Edward ! There was a leap of her heart, a blush on her cheek, a brightening—an unconscious one—of her eyes. The undefinable dread which had made the future a misty and cloudy scene, brought to her now

more natural youthful feelings than she had ever known in her intercourse with Edward before. The very gladness she felt to see him come, made her shrink back almost afraid.

He saw these signs ; but that which once would have made his own heart bound with joy, now pierced with agony.

They were of short duration. Edward approached slowly ; no joy, no impatience in his step ; his eyes downcast, his cheek deadly pale—a sad and serious gravity pervading his whole appearance. He was unhappy. Clare had no more thoughts of self, and she quickened her steps to meet him.

He took her offered hand in silence, then said, “I am come to speak to you, Clare ; but not here ; let us go in.”

She led the way without a word, a chill creeping over her.

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At the drawing-room window Mrs. Hollis was sitting weeping; silently, quietly, yet tears dropping fast upon the fingers that endeavoured to be as nimble as heretofore. She looked up in surprise at the sudden entrance, and hastily searched for her handkerchief before she greeted Edward; but he waited for no greeting. He went up to her and said, "Mrs. Hollis, I wish to speak to Clare alone: will you leave us to each other?"

She looked at him in astonishment. What could he have to say, but one thing, and was it to be said with a voice and brow like that? She obeyed, however, at once, and the door closed, and they remained alone.

"What have you got to say to me, Edward?" Clare began, forcing herself to speak. "I fear you are unhappy."

"I am come to tell you, Clare," he said,

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in the same sad, calm, unexcited manner, "that I know from Mr. Grantley all that was in store for me, had I proved worthy of it ; but I am unworthy. I am come to tell you so, and then to part for ever."

Clare pressed her hands together to still her fearful, beating heart.

"Dear Edward, what have you done?" she said in a low and trembling voice.

He looked at her with a gaze of unutterable agony ; then, in the same sad, determined manner, answered her :—"When you drove me from you last autumn, Clare, I went mad. Mad, not with the stroke of God, but from my own wild heart. I called you pitiless ; I doubted, forced myself to doubt, your love. I went to Abergeale, and there temptation came in my way. I did not love another, but without love I made another my promised wife. Now, Clare, you know what I

am, and that no blessing from your father can ever rest on me."

The vague dread of latter days, the former fears regarding Edward, which had assailed Clare, had all pointed but in one direction; the fear lest he should prove unworthy of her love. She had feared that something might arise which, according to her sense of duty, must cause their separation; of late, that something *had* arisen, and that Edward felt it. But of his fidelity—it would be idle to say she had had no doubts, for no shadow of such a possibility had ever crossed the clear serenity of her trust. The shock, therefore, of his present confession could not but be great—so great it was in fact, so unexpected, that for a moment that strength and self-control, which rarely forsakes, in trying times, those who are willing to be strong, forsook her. Her colour ebbed entirely

away ; the pulse of life for an instant stood still.

“ Clare, speak to me,” Edward cried, in irrepressible anguish, as he watched her countenance.

The sound of his voice roused her at once. The tide of life ebbed back ; the shock was over and gone ; in an instant she was in her new existence, and was herself to meet its trials. She half rose from her seat, and held out her hand to him. “ You said right,” she said, gently ; “ we are parted for ever. Dear Edward, may you be as happy as my wishes and prayers would have you be.”

Edward took her hand and held it, and gazed into her face till he could see no more. Dropping it hastily, he turned away, and stood for some minutes leaning against the window, gazing out into the fading day, observing nothing.

When he returned to her his manner was altered. His cheek was flushed ; his composure was gone ; some new thoughts, hopes, dreams, temptations, were rushing over him. " Clare," he began, in a restless, excited manner, " listen to me. I leave it in your hands ; hear me before you decide. I know that, between you and me, there is a great gulf fixed—not this gulf only, of my own making, but the wider gulf of my unworthiness. Heaven itself is not more removed from earth than you are removed from me. I know it now—feel it—see it : there in the dust must I lie all my life long. But, Clare, in life there is hope, and there is greater hope in penitence. The time might come when that blessing—that dying blessing—might rest on my head. Shall we cut it off for ever ? Dearest Clare, I know you have loved, and do love me, even as I love you,

only with a better and holier love. Shall that love be counted as nothing? Nay; listen yet. I have in my madness chosen another wife—and I will not deny it—one to whom friendship binds me, my best friend's dear sister; but, Clare, though she loves me, she knows I do not love her, not with this love, at least. Think of her also. Shall a word bind her and me, both perhaps, to misery for ever? Ah! Clare, duty has many sides, let not one mislead us."

"But truth, Edward, has but one," she said, "she should know all the truth; and then, if she consents, you are hers. Oh! Edward," she continued earnestly, "deal nobly and honestly with her and with yourself, and remember that it is not in following our own wayward wills that happiness will be found. First do right—God will order all the rest for us."

He said no word to answer or gainsay her. The moment of passion was over and gone—stilled at her voice. He left her again and stood as before gazing out into the twilight.

And Clare sate still and silent. The light of her life was fading away ; she knew it and felt it : yet this fading was seen but as in the dim distance ; there was a present thought that strengthened her ; the thought, the hope, the prayer, that through trial Edward might be made perfect.

Suddenly he returned to her. His manner was quiet, and his voice was low and calm. “ Then, Clare,” he said, holding out his hand, “ we are parted for ever !” This is no more a place for me. God bless you, and in His good time give you joy. Bless me now if you can, and I will go.”

“ God bless you,” she said softly and firmly, and Edward wrung her hand and was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

Till from the straw the flail the corn doth beat,
Until the chaff be purged from the wheat,
Yea, till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
The richness of the flour will scarce appear.

GEORGE WITHER.

THREE days after his parting with Clare Edward arrived at Abergeale. A great change had suddenly come over him. It was partly the exhaustion of overwrought feeling, partly the calm that follows *any* decision after a time of strife and doubt; but it was also,

and chiefly, the germ of a new character beginning to put forth its buds.

In the weeks through which he had lately passed, though they had been too much marked by sensation and passion to permit of self-examination, a work had silently been going on—that work from which alone true repentance springs—the work of self-abasement. It seems at all times a startling doctrine that the root of perfection can grow only in the dust of humiliation—in the consciousness that there is no health in us: but none can look very deeply into human nature without the conviction of its truth. Men go on their ways guided by their wishes, their passions, or their wisdom, and sooner or later, soon to most, sooner or later to all, those errors, wanderings, and disappointments come, which teach them that the light by which they walked was a false, or at the

best a feeble, one. Then they look upward and say, "*Cause Thou me to know the way wherein I should walk,*" and with that prayer, which is the action of the highest and the only perfectly stable principle, a new era in their existence begins. This time had come to Edward : after much wandering the right track was found ; the ship which hitherto had been the sport of the winds, conscious of its own powerlessness, was taking to itself a rudder and a guide.

It is a beautiful thought, somewhere suggested, that the failings of good characters may in a future state become the perfection of their virtue ; as that the over-soft and clinging, may be spirits of peculiar love—the over-strong and resolute, spirits of marvellous power. Nor is it uncommon to see such transformations here below. Weeds when dead, add to the fertility of the ground, and

faults overcome give lustre to the character. Edward's ardent spirit and resolute will required much to tame it down and bridle it ; but it was a spirit of such a kind that cannot stagnate ; once on the right track it could not but shine more and more to the perfect day.

He had had little communication with Abergeale since his departure, five or six weeks before this time. The declining health and daily increasing infirmities of Mr. Caradoc, had made Ralph unwilling to absent himself, even for a day, and Edward had been in no mood for communications with others. The warfare within had been too fierce to relieve itself by any outward show.

Though the least *exigeant* and the most unselfish of men, Ralph had been somewhat hurt at Edward's neglect ; the more so considering the strange uncertain state of affairs he had left at Abergeale. But no shade of

resentment could survive the first glance into his face. Suffering was depicted there, which the most undiscerning must have read—intense, inexpressible, though possibly now at rest.

“My dear Edward,” he said, grasping his hand affectionately, “welcome back again; but I wish with a happier countenance.”

Edward returned the kind greeting, but without noticing the conclusion; and after absently speaking of indifferent things, he said, “Where is Lilia, Ralph? I want to talk to her.”

“Edward,” Ralph began, seriously, and warningly, but his companion interrupted him.

“Not a word, Ralph. Let me speak to Lilia; and let it be now, if she does not object. Do not fear to trust me. I am not mad now, nor obstinate, nor self-willed. I

have had enough to sober me for ever. Will you send her to me, or let me go to her?"

"I will send her," Ralph said; but he still stood musing and uncertain, till Edward, with impatience, hurried him away.

Lilia came. She had gone through much, and her temper had been irritated, and her high spirit chafed by anxiety and neglect. Pride and irritation were in her heart as she prepared to obey Edward's summons; but with her too it needed but one glance into his face to banish them. She approached silently, and held out her hand, and in her tearful eyes there was a wistful gaze of inquiry and sympathy with his grief, which went to Edward's heart.

"I have suffered much since I saw you, Lilia," he said, in answer to it.

"Why have you suffered?" she asked, and she looked at him with a piercing gaze.

“From my own unworthiness,” he replied, sadly.

She stood looking down for a few moments—then, with a rising colour, she fixed her eyes steadily upon him, and asked, “Did your suffering come from what you said to me? If it was so, you are free.” Her voice was clear and steady; but Edward saw her quivering lips as she ceased to speak.

“Lilia,” he answered calmly and seriously, “I did not deceive you, nor will I deceive you now. From her whom I love best, I am parted by my own unworthiness. No matter why or wherefore now—you shall know all when you will—it is enough that so it is. The heart I bring to you is a sad and wasted one. It rests with you to refuse or accept it. If it will make you happy to be free, let us be free; if not, dear Lilia, come as you once promised, to bless my lonely home—to

comfort, to guide, to help, to cheer me, and I, for my part, will make you happy if I can."

"If I did but know what you most wish," Lilia said, turning from him with tearful eyes. Her own heart spoke too plainly—spite of pride she felt it would be happiness to be his wife.

"What I wish most, dear Lilia, is your happiness," he said, taking her hand with grave tenderness, and there was truth in his voice and in his mind.

A few more words, and it was decided. Lilia was Edward's promised bride. It was a strange position for a proud and wilful girl. But so great was the fascination about Edward, that she did not feel it. For her own part, she felt only too happy to be permitted to give him her love—only too happy to be allowed to minister to his comfort.

In less than a month afterwards they were married at Abergeale.

A few hours before the marriage took place Edward wrote to Clare :—

“ We are now indeed parted, and for ever. Not till the memory of the past is swallowed up in the duty of the present, can I ever dare to see you again. Pray for me that the duties I have wilfully taken on myself may be done faithfully. Pray for me that I may walk in your father’s steps, and become less unworthy of your past love and his blessing. Clare, for the last time, best and dearest, fare well.

“ E. W.”

* * * *

Old Mr. Caradoc died a few weeks after his daughter’s marriage. She and Edward remained with him ; Edward, sharing in all her cares, soothing all her griefs. Sad as they were, those weeks were the happiest of their married life.

Shortly after this event, Edward took his wife home to Middlethorpe, and from that moment peace vanished from Lilia's breast. The softness of early feeling, the sad and subduing scenes which followed her marriage, had for a time altered her natural temper ; but Lilia was Lilia still ; her feelings quick and proud, impatient of neglect, and jealous of her power. As she came to know her husband more, she loved him yet more passionately, and dissatisfied with that calm love, that kind considerateness, that never ceasing care and sympathy with which he encircled her, she began to pine for a love more like her own. If love is blind, jealousy is more blind ; none like the jealous defeat their own desire.

On the day of their arrival at Middlethorpe, Edward, for the first time, spoke at great length of Clare. Lilia had never yet

dared to ask for full particulars of the tale. Edward had had no wish to speak, but he imposed it on himself as a duty for this day. He had another motive also. What Clare had been at Middlethorpe, he wished Lilia to be. He spoke of her, therefore, and in his earnestness for Lilia's good, spoke in no measured terms and with a warmth that might have been misinterpreted. Yet none but the perverse and jealous could so have misinterpreted him. That it was for Lilia's sake was evident in every word he said ; and he touchingly concluded by begging her to perfect herself, that she might the better be able to guide *his* wandering ways.

Had not jealousy interfered, Lilia must have been touched, but his words of praise planted a thorn in her heart ; and she made no effort to free herself from it. With open eyes she had chosen her position, but she had miscal-

culated her strength to act in it, and endure it. This was the first beginning of discontent, but it grew apace.

The first outbreak was on another occasion. Returning home one day, before dinner, Edward feeling tired, threw himself into a chair in the drawing-room, instead of going as usual straight to Lilia's room. She knew of his return and came down to meet him. The chair he had taken was opposite the fireplace, and his eyes, as she entered, were on the picture that hung above. It was not the first time that Lilia had watched his eyes fixed in that direction; and the information received from the housekeeper, that it had always been thought like Miss Willoughby, had given her from the first uncomfortable feelings. She was irritated now, and, unfortunately, suppressed her temper; not that irritation is right, but that in

relationships so near, it is better to speak the discomfort than to brood over it within. Jealous feelings and fancied injuries do not gain less by pondering on them. The following morning Lilia's part was taken. During Edward's absence, she caused the picture to be removed to a less frequented room, and replaced it by a portrait of Sir Hugh.

It was not till after dinner that Edward perceived the change. He was leaving the room in search of a book, when his eyes in passing were attracted towards it. His colour rose, and turning to Lilia, he said, with pain and displeasure in his voice, "What have you done, Lilia? I would rather you had moved any picture in the house than that one."

"I don't doubt that," she replied, her passion bursting forth in look and voice.

His manner changed; an expression of

intense distress passed over his features ; and when he spoke again, there was nothing but kindness and compassion in his voice. "If you cannot trust me, Lilia," he said, sadly, "let it be as you will."

He said no more, and went on his errand, nor ever recurred to the subject again. Lilia saw him go and return with a heart choking with shame and emotion ; but she also remained silent. Something of a scene would have calmed and pacified her. Such quietness in her eyes was cold ; yet ashamed in that calm, kind presence to give way to passion, she kept it within—and an everlasting sense of injury remained.

In the circumstances in which Edward was placed, to be utterly blameless was, perhaps, impossible. He, himself, was conscious of many shortcomings ; yet, the whole energy, the will of his nature, was

set to do right. In a short time his character had changed as a lifetime sometimes fails to change it. He had become gentle, serious, thoughtful—his whole care apparently to consult the wishes, and to fulfil his duties to those about him. Once all impulse—now all principle.

Lilia saw, and mourned over the change. It was the strange, impulsive, freakish Edward to whom her cares had been necessary—who had won her love—and though in her heart of hearts she revered him now, her eyes turned with fonder memory to the past—she felt subdued and slave-like before his calm steadfast will. To fret him into impatience—to rouse him to displeasure—even this would have been a relief, it would have pleased her to see passion, though against herself, sparkling in his eye. He was too much above her, and her rebel temper refused to rise. So two

years passed away—years of misery to them both. How much they suffered, they knew well in their own perturbed spirits, and none but they.

At the end of two years changes came. A child was born at Middlethorpe. Whether it was the calm of sickness—whether this new link of happiness between her husband and herself—whether a newborn joy, in the sense of a love, that would be all her own—whatever the cause, jealousies faded from Lilia's heart. Four days after the birth of her child, she pointed out to Edward its fair skin and small glimpses of silver white hair. "It will be a true Willoughby," she said, "and we will call it Clare."

There was something in the voice and manner that touched Edward in his heart. He stooped and kissed her brow, and said, with fondness in his tone, "No, Lilia, there

are other fair things besides Willoughbys, and this one shall be Lilia, and not Clare." And Lilia it was called.

This was the dawn of a new day—the peace, the help, the comfort, for which Edward had sighed, appeared at last to be falling around him. But the dawn was overcast. From her new-found happiness the young wife was called away, and two months after the birth of her child, Lilia was in her grave. Her short history has been shortly told; for why fix the eyes on a light so soon to be extinguished.

* . * * *

About a year and a half afterwards, Edward and Ralph, who was often with him, were walking at a distance from Middlethorpe. They came in sight of Ralph's former possession, "the Lodge;"—both looked, the same thoughts passed through both minds, but on neither side were they spoken.

They walked on for a short time in silence, then Ralph suddenly cleared his throat, and said, "I have something I wish to say to you, Edward. It is painful to you and to me in some ways, and yet it should be said."

"If it *should* be said, Ralph, say it however painful, otherwise let it alone."

"I think it should be said, my dear fellow." Ralph went on with emotion, "You will not suspect me of forgetting or wishing that Lilia, my own dear sister, should be forgotten; but there are duties to the living as well as the dead, and I think the time is come when you should consider them."

"Ralph," Edward said, in a low voice, "this need not have been said; let it alone."

"I think," Ralph continued, without seeming to hear him; "that in some respects our first care should be for the living. Those

whom we trust are at rest, cannot be influenced by care or passion more ; but the living are like ourselves, still in warfare and struggle, and for them our sympathies are needful. Do you understand me, Edward ? There is one who loved you, and loves you still ;—why leave her longer to be alone ? No worthier love than yours can be hers.”

Edward’s countenance was averted. Ralph could not read it ; he waited anxiously for him to speak. “Thank you, Ralph,” he said at last, calmly, “for speaking what was painful to you for my sake ; but now it is done, if a duty it was ; and for the future let it alone. There are things of which no man can judge but his own self. This is one. Let no more be said.”

“Yes, Edward, I have more to say ; I have a confession to make.” He paused and sighed. “I must tell you of my dream and

my madness. It is an old one, but it is passed now." Edward looked at him with curiosity and interest as he proceeded. "When your child was born, Edward—when, after my short visit to poor Lilia, I left you and her, as I fondly thought, happy together, a new life of happiness beginning; I thought the time was come when I would try whether an old dream could ever be realized."

"You have loved Clare then, Ralph?" Edward said, with much emotion.

"Yes, my dear fellow, such was my madness, but I tell you it is over now. Don't let me give you pain."

Edward said nothing. It was difficult to him to put his deepest thoughts into words, but the look he turned on Ralph, conveyed so much of trust in his affection, of appreciation of his worth and his motives, of acknowledgment of all he had done and would do

for him, that Ralph's heart swelled, and tears filled his eyes.

"Go on, Ralph," Edward said, after a moment.

"I went to her, Edward, and told her what I had long felt. I told her not to distress herself, but to tell me truly whether ever it would be possible for me to gain that which I too fondly desired; you may guess her answer, Edward, or I should not now be here, or thus. And thankful, indeed, I am, dear Edward, that it is so; I would have made her happy if man could, but there is better joy in store for her. And why I have told you this, Edward, is because I then saw plainly that you were not and never would be forgotten. She did not tell me so, or you would never have heard me speak, but I saw it before I began to tell my own tale. I knew I had no hope. She looked to me

like one who had gone through great tribulation, who had a *past* on earth and a *future* in heaven, and nothing more. Have I said enough, Edward? Will you be guided by my voice?"

"No, Ralph," he replied, in a low tone. "Do not think I refuse in any pride or unthankfulness; but in such cases a man's own conscience is his best guide. And now let this subject be mentioned no more."

He spoke with a decision that would not brook further efforts to move it.

They walked on a little way in silence, and then Edward said, cheerfully, "I have not told you my plans, Ralph. I am going to make a nurse of you. I want you to take my child to Abergeale for a few months. I am going abroad."

"Abroad! Edward," with deep disap-

pointment in his tone. "I thought your wandering days were over."

"Why, Ralph, it is no sin to go abroad," he replied, smiling. "I look upon it as wholesome medicine in some cases. I think it will be good for me, and I am going."

"And when, and where?"

"When a few things are finished that must be done, and where my fancy leads me when once I am across the water. You are as bad as Mr. Grantley, Ralph. I believe he passed a sleepless night after I told him of my intention."

"We are sorry to lose you, Edward—that is all; but make what use of me you please. No pleasanter use than what you have planned. I almost wish you were off, and that little Lilia was safe with me at Abergeale."

CHAPTER XIV.

“With aching hands and bleeding feet,
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone,
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done,
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.”

ARNOLD.

Two years more passed away. It was Christmas time—six years after the death of Sir Hugh Willoughby.

Ellen was alone with her husband one evening in the drawing-room at Uskford.

Suddenly she put down her work and said, "No, Henry, I have lost all hope, and I will not do it again."

He seemed to understand her allusion and said, "But why, Ellen? I think you are wrong. Edward is your nearest relation, and long, long since it was time for you to forgive."

"Forgive, yes; but never forget. I can't, at least until——"

"I know what you mean, and I think you are wrong."

"Oh! Henry, if you could know thoroughly as I do all that Clare has suffered you would take this matter more seriously. I know she has borne this and everything like an angel, but I never look in her face without feeling that Edward was . . . I won't say it, I shall speak too strongly."

"You mistake," Colonel Ashton said, se-

riously, " if you think I take this or anything relating to Clare's happiness lightly. When I look at her, indeed, I feel that she has gone beyond our ideas of happiness, and has gained a peace which no earthly thing can disturb again ; but still we know how she loved Edward, and with how intense a feeling she regards him still. I believe it would make her happy to be his wife, and I believe he is fitted now to have so perfect a being for his own. But still, Ellen, these wishes and views of ours do not alter the case. That must be as Edward wills. Nothing we can wish or do can hasten or delay what he has decided. You asked him to come with his little girl last Christmas, and he refused ; but why should that hinder you from asking him again ? I call it a matter of right and wrong. Long, and long since, I am sure, his conduct has atoned for old errors.

It is not on our side that estrangement should begin."

"But if he come and mean nothing but to be our friend—shall we not add to Clare's sorrow?"

"My dear Ellen," her husband said, smiling, "you must forgive me if I say I think I understand Clare better than you do. To talk of Clare's sorrow when you look at that angel face! Depend upon it she is not dreaming as you allow yourself to dream—and she could meet Edward with perfect comfort."

Ellen did not look convinced, but did not answer. She began to look for some letters in a drawer. When she found what she sought she put them before her and said, "If I could see a spark of hope—but I can't. Now listen, Henry, this is the answer to my letter, when I sent our subscriptions last year to the church."

“My dear Ellen,—A thousand thanks to you all for the letter and its enclosure. I beg your pardons for making no application. It was such a small matter, that really I did not think of it. I feel, however, that you do well to be angry. I ought to have thought that you and Clare would like to take part in anything that is to beautify our old church or do our people good. Another time I will not fail to apply to you. The change is very slight, but the improvement as to room and beauty great.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“EDWARD WILLOUGHBY.”

Over this letter Ellen pondered and sighed. She then opened another and read it.

“My dear Ellen,—Your letter is too kind for me to delay a moment in answering it, though I am sorry to say I cannot accept your invitation. Ralph and his sister Edith,

accompanied by a large family of small children, are coming to me for Christmas, and I hope intend to remain for some time. I thank you none the less. I return your good wishes a thousandfold to you and all with you and around you. Don't forget Mrs. Hollis. My little girl is very talkative, and astonishes me by her powers of observation. When I see Mrs. Vivian's children I shall be better able to judge whether she is an infant prodigy or not.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ EDWARD WILLOUGHBY.”

Over this also Ellen sighed and pondered.

Her husband watched her with a smile.

“ My dear Ellen,” he said at last, “ it is quite in vain. You will find nothing in those letters, and it would be very unlikely that you should.”

“ I don't know that, Henry. Little things

come out in letters—things people hardly know they feel and never would express.”

“I think there are no little things there.”

“No, none,—that is what I say. If I could see a spark of hope I should be satisfied.”

“Do you know, Ellen,” Colonel Ashton said seriously, after a few moments thought, “I think you are altogether wrong. My opinion of Edward is now as high as once it was doubtful, and that opinion is chiefly formed by the self-control he has shown in this instance. His entire avoidance of Clare is, perhaps, strange ; but all men have their own way of acting and feeling ; and for the conduct itself, his suffering these years to pass without any expression of his former wishes, I think is equally worthy of him and of her. Was it for him to think that she was to be taken up and put down at his plea-

sure, and according as he was free or not? For my part, if he had been hasty in his return, I should have given but a doubtful consent."

"Well, Henry, I do think you are right," his wife replied with full conviction. "If I only could be sure it would at some time come. And so," she continued, after a moment, "you really do now think him worthy of Clare?"

"I do, indeed. Here is a letter about him, I received this morning from Mr. Grantley. I think you will like best to read it to yourself." He put a letter into Ellen's hand. It was partly on business, and contained many allusions to Sir Hugh. The part relating to Edward ran thus:—

"Some weeks ago you asked me my opinion regarding Sir Edward. I was hurried at the time, and mislaid your letter; but in turning

over some papers last night, I found it again. I hope my silence on that point gave no false impression. It is impossible for me in any words that present themselves before me, to convey to you in an adequate manner, what my true opinion is. It is so high that you might suppose me to have become a fulsome flatterer. I think from the first, I appreciated his character more than others did. There is a certain fire in some young minds which warms my more sluggish nature. I felt it in my intercourse with him—even when that fire burnt fitfully and cloudily as in his earlier days; now it is as bright and pure as it is ardent. The good he does, not here only, nor on his own property only, but in the world in general, is such as you would not imagine, unless it was brought before your eyes; and what the influence of his character may be,

when some few years are past, my heart beats to think. Truly the prayers prayed by my dear old friend for his welfare, have been heard in Heaven. 'If only he could see,' is the thought continually present to my mind!—Perhaps he does so.

"I have now but one wish. I hardly like to speak of it; but you will imagine what that wish must be. I watch and watch for signs of its fulfilment; but though none appear, my feeling is that those who are so fitted for each other, cannot for ever remain asunder. It is in the hands of God."

Ellen put down the letter in silence, and with tears in her eyes. At last she said, "Life is wonderful; who would have supposed that that strange Edward would come to this?"

"It is the discipline of life, Ellen," her husband said, smiling. "What Edward

chiefly wanted was humility. He has had enough to humble him, and he has profited by his errors, as only good natures do profit."

* * * *

"Coming events often cast their shadows before" in a peculiar manner. Letters written overnight, expressing hopelessness or hope, strong wishes or great fears, regarding many small yet important matters, are almost proverbially useless on the following day; while earnest conversations on particular subjects are constantly remarked to be precursors of the fulfilment of the speculations then and there expressed. It is not intended to give to this fact any mysterious value. It is curious, yet easily accounted for.

The very morning after the conversation held by Ellen and Colonel Ashton, and before Ellen's letter of invitation was written, the following letter was received :—

"MY DEAR ELLEN,

"For some days I have watched the coming of my letters with peculiar anxiety. I expected one from you: expected because I hoped. I wish to be invited to Uskford for Christmas. Will you invite me? Your kind letter last year makes me bold. Dear Ellen, I shall be very happy to see you all again.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"E. WILLOUGHBY.

"When I say invite me, I suppose I need not add that I have a nurse and child who will by no means consent to be left at home."

Ellen's eyes sparkled with joy as she placed the letter in her husband's hand.

They were still talking over its contents when Clare came in. She often paid them a visit at their early breakfast, for Mrs. Hollis

was now declining in health and infirm in body, and at a later hour in the day required Clare's attention and services.

Six years had passed away, and Clare was changed ; but only so changed that the pure and clear mind shone purer and clearer and steadier, in her clear countenance. Colonel Ashton was right ; there was no sorrow in her lovely face. The look which Ralph had observed four years before this time, as of one come out of great tribulation, had passed away. The war and strife within had ceased, and there was a great calm. That she had suffered, you knew : that peculiar expression of a quiet calm follows only on suffering ; the most precious things are won by toil ; and there is a calm of mind and a beauty of countenance, beyond compare on earth, which only springs out of tribulation.

She was just what you would have ima-

gined her to be. Six years can do much for those who with toils and pains climb the steep ascent of Heaven, and Clare had made many steps forward ; but she was the same Clare still, with her quick affections and ardent sympathies. The beautiful lines of Crabbe describing one whose early hopes of happiness had been blighted, were in no degree suitable to her :—

What now to her is all the world esteems ?
She is awake and cares not for its dreams,
But moves, while yet on earth, like one above
Its hopes, its fears, its loathings, and its love.

There had been a time when the battle of life had been hardly fought—when she had turned away her eyes with dread from the joyless future ; when a blight had fallen on her existence, in its effects something like that which follows in the natural world on biting winds in May. All the early fruits and flowers

were cut off. Summer was to come, for youth was before her; but that which is youth far more than the measurement of years can make it—the confidence in happiness, the hopefulness of life—was gone.

Something of bodily weakness, consequent on the shocks she had undergone, and of nervous depression, caused by the sudden transplanting of her life into a new and ever monotonous course, added at this period to her mental disquiet, and a time of trial ensued, in which the light of the sun and the moon and the stars was darkened.

But this did not long endure. Mental sufferings are very bitter, but valuable in proportion to their bitterness. Through them the heart best learns to know itself, discovering by their means dangers and weaknesses unsuspected before. Through them it best learns how to sympathize with

others, finding by experience how small a cloud to the eyes of observers may darken a whole existence. They are as a Slough of Despond, through which many of the best are appointed to pass ; but once bravely and faithfully struggled through, they rarely return again. After darkness comes light, and nothing teaches what light is, like the darkness that has gone before. Bitter they may be, but they win great rewards. Henceforward something like gales from heaven play around the path of life.

So it was with Clare. When the work of pain was done, pain departed and perfect peace ensued. At the time of which we now speak, no trace of the former remained. Cheerful hopes and thankful trust animated and made her happy, and though calm herself a kind of sunlight flowed from her presence, shedding joy on all who approached her.

Ellen put the letter she received into her sister's hand, and then, unwilling to pain her, averted her own sparkling eyes from her face as she read ; but there was no need. Clare read it with pleasure, but of fluttering expectation or blushes of consciousness there were none. Ellen could not fathom the depth or holiness of the feeling with which she regarded Edward. That he through trial had been made perfect, more perfect than her highest imagination had ever pictured ; this was the joy that shed an unceasing brightness on her life. For other thoughts—long since they had been put aside. Her life and Edward's, their earthly destiny,—had been committed to the disposal of One unerring in wisdom and in love, and no agitating hopes or fears disturbed the solemn peace of that thought. If good for Edward and herself, at some time their two hearts would be united.

If not, with perfect submission she resigned the hope. There was nothing stoical in this repose—nor yet was it a natural attainment. It was a state of mind which they only can attain whose eyes and hearts are purified, to look through the mists of earth to the reality of heaven.

“Thrice happy she that is so well assured

Unto herself—and settled so in heart

That neither will for better be allured,

Ne fears to worse with any chaunce to start.

But like a steady ship doth strongly part

The raging waves, and keeps her course aright,

Ne ought for tempest doth from it depart

Ne ought for fairer weather's false delight.

Such self assurance need not fear the spight

Of grudging foes, ne favour seek of friends,

But in the stay of her own steadfast might

Neither to one herself, nor other bends.

Most happy she that most assured doth rest,

But he most happy who such one loves best.

CHAPTER XV.

"God better knoweth than we, the best times, and the best means, and the best things, wherein the good of our souls consisteth."

HOOKEE.

With a grave and thoughtful countenance, Edward received Ellen's kind answer to his letter.

His little girl was playing at his feet. He lifted her up and kissed her seriously, and after a moment's thought said, "Do you know, Lilia, that you have no mother?"

"Yes, I have," the child said, "my mamma is in heaven."

"You are right," he said, and kissed her again, and paused. "Yes, Lilia," he went on, after a moment, "your mamma is in heaven. You must try to follow her there, and think of her there, and remember that you never again can have a mother on earth. Do you listen to me, Lilia? Perhaps you may be told that I shall give you a new mother, but it will not be true."

"Greenie says she wishes you would. I heard her—"

"Greenie wishes what is impossible for you, Lilia. I cannot give you a mother; God only gives that, and he gives it but once; but, Lilia, listen, my little girl: my hope is that I shall give you a kind and good friend, to watch over you, and guide you, and teach you. If I am so happy, will

you be good to her, and love her, for your own mother's sake, who is in heaven ?

"If she is good I will," little Lilia said, who inherited from her mother strong opinions, and from both her parents a strong will.

"She will be good, Lilia ; perhaps too good for us to have," and he paused thoughtfully. "Now that will do, only if . . . if we are happier than we have been, remember what I have said."

Edward kissed his child, and sent her away, then putting on his hat, walked down to the village of Middlethorpe.

He stopped at Mr. Grantley's house, and hearing he was at home, went in.

His unusually grave air attracted Mr. Grantley's attention, and he said, "What is it, Sir Edward ; no unpleasant business I hope ?"

"No, Mr. Grantley, but I came—first I

must tell you that I shall not be at home this Christmas, I am going to Uskford."

Mr. Grantley's countenance brightened. "It is a loss to us, my dear Sir Edward," he said warmly, "but I am truly happy to hear it."

"And why so happy?" Edward asked, seriously.

Mr. Grantley paused a moment, then said simply, "I am glad to think that you and your cousins will associate again. You are near relations, there should not be division."

"Was that all you thought?" in the same grave tone of inquiry.

"Ah! Sir Edward, do not inquire into an old man's thoughts, he cannot help them."

"Mr. Grantley," Edward began again, "it is now six years since you were called to attend Sir Hugh's dying bed. Do you remember what then passed?"

"I do, my dear young friend, I do!"

"Then now you know why I am come to you this day. If you give me permission to go once again to seek what I lost, I go to seek it; if not, it is better that such hopes should be for ever at rest."

"My permission," Mr. Grantley said, eagerly, "dear, dear Sir Edward, you have it joyfully, and with all my heart. I have watched, waited, prayed for this, and have been often tempted to say, life is short—why this delay?"

"Delay!" Edward said, and a flush mounted to his brows; "if you speak so, Mr. Grantley, I shall be afraid to trust you. Do you think I should have honoured her; do you think she would have listened to me, if I had seized the first moments of a freedom brought about by God's chastening hand, to offend her with a love that never did, alas!"

—and an expression of pain passed over his features—“but ought to have slept? Do you think I should have dared to approach her again, till I had proved to myself, till I had proved to her and you, that the lessons learnt in adversity were not altogether lost. Delay! I feel it yet too soon; but human nature is weak, and life, as you say, is short and uncertain, and . . . I almost feel as if I can endure suspense no more.”

“My dear Sir Edward,” Mr. Grantley, said, gravely, after a pause of some moments, “I am not ashamed to say that you are right and I was wrong; impatience misleads us; we are all, or almost all, in that way, children; we have not patience to watch the perfect flower grow. I thought you worthy of her, I did not sufficiently consider that worth must be proved and tried, before we own that it is worth indeed. But now,

surely the time of probation is justly over ; if mortal man can feel sure, you may feel secure of your own self. Go, then, and prosper ; my prayers go with you."

"And I may tell her that I come from you, and that you send her father's blessing on my request."

"You may indeed ; and never did I speak so confidently in my own name as now I do in his. Go, and God bless you."

Edward returned the eager shake of his hand ; and, as gravely and thoughtfully, though with a more elastic tread, he returned the way he came.

* * * *

Two days before Christmas Day Edward left Middlethorpe, and arrived at Uskford.

Ellen was sitting alone in the drawing-room, at the close of the day, when he entered leading his little girl by the hand. She had

never seen him since the old long-passed, almost forgotten days of their first strange acquaintance; and at the sight of him, too vividly those old days rushed before her eyes, and carried her back to the scenes and company of her happy girlhood. She had hastened to greet him with a welcome and a smile, but when she held out her hand, there was no greeting but tears.

Edward shook her hand in silence, then seeing her emotion, busied himself in removing the bonnet and cloak from his little girl's head and shoulders. When he had done this, he lifted her up and put her in Ellen's arms. "A new acquaintance," he said, with a slight sweet smile, "but I hope you will like her."

Ellen kissed the child and put her down, and sate down herself in silence. It was no longer old memories, but the change in Edward that affected her so strongly.

Those touching moments of softness, which in their rareness had been formerly so attractive, seemed now the tone of his mind, the pervading charm of his whole manner. The resolute will, the quick and forcible words, the animation of his countenance—these things were not extinguished, but subdued and tamed to an inexpressible gentleness. The softness of strong spirits is always touching; Ellen found it almost overpowering, and could scarcely look at him for her blinding tears.

When she did look, she was struck by the equal change in his appearance. He was far more changed than could have been the effects of six years' *time* alone. His hair was thickly sown with grey, and there were deep and furrowed lines on his brow. He was thinner and paler, too; changed, as some would have said, for the worse. But the

same softening charm that pervaded his manner, beautified also his countenance; and while in some respects he seemed to have advanced in years, in others he had bent back his steps, till he resembled again the portrait of his own smiling and innocent infancy.

"You are so changed, Edward," she said at last, involuntarily speaking the impressions of the moment.

"Am I, Ellen?" he said, smiling, "I am afraid that is not much to be regretted."

"Perhaps not," she replied with something of emotion still in her voice, "except that to me all changes have sadness in them."

He did not pursue the subject, and Ellen in a moment roused herself and rang the bell for her children, observing they had been mad with impatience to see their new

cousin. Little Lilia stood quiet and demure by her father's side. She had so long been his friend and companion, that although a perfect child, and a wilful one, she had the manners, when she pleased, of advanced years.

A troop of children came bounding in, followed by Colonel Ashton. Four children were Ellen's, the rest were other cousins.

"Let us see if Edward can guess by intuition, his own relations," Colonel Ashton said, smiling, after giving his own cordial greeting; and he drove the troop of children round Edward's seat.

Three were named at once: they had fair Willoughby faces; but on a girl of six, with black hair and a joyous face, Edward laid a doubtful hand.

"I think she is one," he said, smiling, as he drew her towards him, "but I am not

sure. What is your name? You must tell me."

"Clare," she said, looking up in his kind face without shyness; "and aunt Clare is my godmother."

He was silent for half-a-minute; then looking at her, said quietly, "You are not like your aunt, you should give your name to her," pointing to a younger girl.

"But mamma says I must be like her," the little girl said eagerly; "and I will and I shall, and I won't give up my name."

"But how will you manage it?" he continued, playfully stroking her dark curls, "must you not cut off all these?"

"Mamma says I must *pray* to be like her," said the child, looking gravely up in his face, "and then I shall."

"Yes, we can all do that," Edward said, stooping and kissing her, then turning to

Ellen, he asked her, with an ease and quietness that puzzled, and in some degree troubled her, "Is Clare here? shall I see her?"

"Not to-night, I am sorry to say: poor Mrs. Hollis was not at all well this morning, and Clare did not like to leave her. Mrs. Hollis is very much changed, Edward."

The following morning after breakfast, Ellen offered to walk with Edward to visit Clare. He consented at once, and sent for his little girl to go with him. As they walked along, Ellen could not help hoping that he would question her regarding Clare, and her way of life—or in some degree satisfy her regarding his intentions. She had not much patience, and delay made her doubtful and uneasy. But though there was no avoidance of Clare's name when it was necessary, he did not speak of her. Ellen

could gather nothing from his manner or his words.

They reached the house, by the same winding way along the stream and up the bank, by which Edward had last visited it. He ceased to speak, and Ellen went a few steps before him and tapped at the window to prepare her sister. She felt nervous and agitated, and led Edward into the drawing-room with a beating heart.

But again there was no need. The relations between Edward and Clare had passed out of the atmosphere of agitations and excitements. Deep feeling there might be, but it was that which "passeth show." Nothing could be calmer and quieter than their greeting. Even of awkwardness and embarrassment there was none.

"I have brought my child to show you," he said, as they sate down, "Lilia," and he

stooped to the little thing, "that is another cousin—will you go and make acquaintance with her?"

Lilia looked up in his face with an earnest inquiring look for a moment, then fixed her eyes on Clare, then walked across the room and put her arms round her neck. "I think you are good," she said, "and I will love you."

Edward smiled, and a faint flush passed over his face. He began, however, immediately to speak on indifferent subjects. There was no lack of things to say, for Middlethorpe was a topic of equal interest to all, and Ellen wondered as she joined in the easy and unembarrassed conversation.

There was only one moment of awkwardness. When Mrs. Hollis came down, which she did, assisted by Clare, she walked slowly up to Edward, and said, "Good morning, Mr. Leigh."

This unexpected and almost forgotten appellation startled and pained him ; his blood mounted to his temples, and for a moment he made no answer.

Clare left Mrs. Hollis, and going round to Edward, said in a low voice, "Mrs. Hollis lives almost entirely in the past now, she did not mean to give you pain."

He said nothing to Clare, but approaching Mrs. Hollis, who was now seated, and taking her hand, he said slowly, as if to catch her attention, "you have called me by a name I do not like—I wish you to forget it, dear Mrs. Hollis, will you promise me to try?"

"It is very hard to forget," she said, with tearful eyes, and shaking her head with a bewildered look ; "I never remember now, but I can't forget."

"Do not trouble her," Edward said, as Ellen began to try and explain, "it is no

real matter, let me talk to her of the past." And he sate down by her side, while Clare and Ellen amused themselves with his child.

Ten days passed away ;—Ellen's anxiety had risen almost beyond the power of concealment. Rarely, very rarely could she fix on word or look that gave her grounds for hope, and with wonder and admiration she contemplated her sister's face, as calm and serene, and more lovely than ever : but Clare was indeed at rest. In the first glance of Edward's eye, she had read wherefore he was come, and in every word he spoke, fresh assurance was given, that the time had arrived when duty commanded on her part doubt and delay no more.

It was not till New Year's Day that he spoke ; he had wished her to judge him with the sight of the eye and the power of the judgment, not by the pictures of fancy.

Then, as side by side they returned from church, he said gently, "Clare, is there hope for me in this new year—hope that your father's blessing may at last rest upon my home? Dear Clare, do not grieve yourself for me, if it must not be—but do your duty;—if I am too unworthy of that blessing, tell me so—I shall bear it; for I know now that not in following our own wayward wills is happiness to be found."

She answered him.

" . . . Ah! needs it now say more?

Methinks the tale is told, joy came at last;

The spark of hope rose bright into a flame,

The sweet spring followed when the cold was past."

And then Sir Hugh had once said, that a home was the best thing left on earth since Paradise. None who had seen the home of Middlethorpe in after days could have doubted the truth of the words he said. "There have been," says

a wise and good writer of this day, "saints of every possible variety of Christian heroism, martyrs of truth, and martyrs of humanity, ascetics, and mystics, and missionaries; but there is a form of sanctity more rare than any of these, and more excellent than most of them. It is that sanctity which 'passing through the valley of Baca, maketh it a well,' which throws over this dark world an atmosphere like that of a yet unforfeited Paradise. It is the sanctity of happiness, it is the conversion of the life of man into a continued eucharistic service, rendered to a gracious Father by a grateful and confiding child." Such was the light of love, and truth, and thankfulness, which was shed from the home of Edward Willoughby.

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